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JEAN INGELOW'S POEMS.

LYRICAL

AND OTHER POEMS

SELECTED FROM THE WRITINGS

OF

JEAN INGELOW

Fourth Edition

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
LONDON AND NEW YORK
1895

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NOTE.

The songs, "When I sit on Market Days," "Like a Lav'rock in the Lift," "The Dove said 'Give us Peace,'" and the sonnet, "We are much Bound to Them that do Succeed," are reprinted from "Mopsa the Fairy," now published by Messrs Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., Paternoster Buildings, London.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE!

O MY heart is sick awishing and awaiting:
  The lad took up his knapsack, he went, he went his way;
And I looked on for his coming, as a prisoner through the grating
  Looks and longs and longs and wishes for its opening day.

On the wild purple mountains, all alone with no other,
  The strong terrible mountains, he longed, he longed to be;
And he stooped to kiss his father, and he stooped to kiss his mother,
  And till I said 'Adieu, sweet Sir,' he quite forgot me.

He wrote of their white raiment, the ghostly capes that screen them,
  Of the storm winds that beat them, their thunder-rents and scars,
And the paradise of purple, and the golden slopes atween them,
  And fields, where grow God's gentian bells and His crocus stars.

He wrote of frail gauzy clouds, that drop on them like fleeces,
And make green their fir forests, and feed their mosses hoar;
Or come sailing up the valleys, and get wrecked and go to pieces,
Like sloops against their cruel strength: then he wrote no more.

O the silence that came next, the patience and long aching!
They never said so much as 'He was a dear-loved son;'
Not the father to the mother moaned, that dreary stillness breaking:
'Ah! wherefore did he leave us so—this, our only one?'

They sat within, as waiting, until the neighbours prayed them,
'At Cromer, by the sea-coast, 'twere peace and change to be;'
And to Cromer, in their patience, or that urgency affrayed them,
Or because the tidings tarried, they came, and took me.

It was three months and over since the dear lad had started:
On the green downs at Cromer I sat to see the view;
On an open space of herbage, where the ling and fern had parted,
Betwixt the tall white lighthouse towers, the old and the new.

Below me lay the wide sea, the scarlet sun was stooping,
And he dyed the waste water, as with a scarlet dye;
And he dyed the lighthouse towers; every bird with white wing swooping
Took his colours, and the cliffs did, and the yawning sky.

Over grass came that strange flush, and over ling and heather,
Over flocks of sheep and lambs, and over Cromer town;
And each filmy cloudlet crossing drifted like a scarlet feather
Torn from the folded wings of clouds, while he settled down.

When I looked, I dared not sigh:—In the light of God's splendour,
With his daily blue and gold, who am I? what am I?
But that passion and outpouring seemed an awful sign and tender,
Like the blood of the Redeemer, shown on earth and sky.

O for comfort, O the waste of a long doubt and trouble!
On that sultry August eve trouble had made me meek;
I was tired of my sorrow—O so faint, for it was double
In the weight of its oppression, that I could not speak!

And a little comfort grew, while the dimmed eyes were feeding,
  And the dull ears with murmur of waters satisfied;
But a dream came slowly nigh me, all my thoughts and fancy leading
  Across the bounds of waking life to the other side.

And I dreamt that I looked out, to the waste waters turning,
  And saw the flakes of scarlet from wave to wave tossed on;
And the scarlet mix with azure, where a heap of gold lay burning
  On the clear remote sea reaches; for the sun was gone.

Then I thought a far-off shout dropped across the still water—
  A question as I took it, for soon an answer came
From the tall white ruined lighthouse: 'If it be the old man's daughter
  That we wot of,' ran the answer, 'what then—who's to blame?'

I looked up at the lighthouse all roofless and storm-broken:
  A great white bird sat on it, with neck stretched out to sea;
Unto somewhat which was sailing in a skiff the bird had spoken,
  And a trembling seized my spirit, for they talked of me.

I was the old man's daughter, the bird went on to name him;
'He loved to count the starlings as he sat in the sun;
Long ago he served with Nelson, and his story did not shame him:
Ay, the old man was a good man—and his work was done.'

The skiff was like a crescent, ghost of some moon departed,
Frail, white, she rocked and curtseyed as the red wave she crossed,
And the thing within sat paddling, and the crescent dipped and darted,
Flying on, again was shouting, but the words were lost.

I said, 'That thing is hooded; I could hear but that floweth
The great hood below its mouth:' then the bird made reply,
'If they know not, more's the pity, for the little shrew-mouse knoweth,
And the kite knows, and the eagle, and the glead and pye.'

And he stooped to whet his beak on the stones of the coping;
And when once more the shout came, in querulous tones he spake,
'What I said was "more's the pity;" if the heart be long past hoping,
Let it say of death, "I know it," or doubt on and break.

'Men must die—one dies by day, and near him moans his mother;
They dig his grave, tread it down, and go from it full loth:
And one dies about the midnight, and the wind moans, and no other,
And the snows give him a burial—and God loves them both.

'The first hath no advantage—it shall not soothe his slumber
That a lock of his brown hair his father aye shall keep;
For the last, he nothing grudgeth, it shall nought his quiet cumber
That in a golden mesh of HIS callow eaglets sleep.

'Men must die when all is said, e'en the kite and glead know it,
And the lad's father knew it, and the lad, the lad too;
It was never kept a secret, waters bring it and winds blow it,
And he met it on the mountain—why then make ado?'

With that he spread his white wings, and swept across the water,
Lit upon the hooded head, and it and all went down;
And they laughed as they went under, and I woke, 'the old man's daughter,'
And looked across the slope of grass, and at Cromer town.

And I said, 'Is that the sky, all grey and silver suited?'
And I thought, 'Is that the sea that lies so white and wan?
I have dreamed as I remember: give me time—I was reputed
Once to have a steady courage—O, I fear 'tis gone!'

And I said, 'Is this my heart? if it be, low 'tis beating,
So he lies on the mountain, hard by the eagles' brood;
I have had a dream this evening, while the white and gold were fleeting,
But I need not, need not tell it—where would be the good?

'Where would be the good to them, his father and his mother?
For the ghost of their dead hope appeareth to them still.
While a lonely watchfire smoulders, who its dying red would smother,
That gives what little light there is to a darksome hill?'

I rose up, I made no moan, I did not cry nor falter,
But slowly in the twilight I came to Cromer town.
What can wringing of the hands do that which is ordained to alter?
He had climbed, had climbed the mountain, he would ne'er come down.

But, O my first, O my best, I could not choose but love
thee:
O, to be a wild white bird, and seek thy rocky bed!
From my breast I'd give thee burial, pluck the down and
spread above thee;
I would sit and sing thy requiem on the mountain
head.

Fare thee well, my love of loves! would I had died
before thee;
O, to be at least a cloud, that near thee I might flow,
Solemnly approach the mountain, weep away my being
o'er thee,
And veil thy breast with icicles, and thy brow with
snow!

A COTTAGE IN A CHINE.

WE reached the place by night,
And heard the waves breaking:
They came to meet us with candles alight
To show the path we were taking,
A myrtle, trained on the gate, was white
With tufted flowers down shaking,

With head beneath her wing,
A little wren was sleeping—
So near, I had found it an easy thing
To steal her for my keeping
From the myrtle bough that with easy swing
Across the path was sweeping.

Down rocky steps rough-hewed.
Where cup-mosses flowered,
And under the trees, all twisted and rude,
Wherewith the dell was dowered,
They led us, where deep in its solitude
Lay the cottage, leaf-embowered.

The thatch was all bespread
With climbing passion flowers;
They were wet, and glistened with raindrops, shed
That day in genial showers.
'Was never a sweeter nest,' we said,
'Than this little nest of ours.'

We laid us down to sleep:
But as for me—waking,
I marked the plunge of the muffled deep
On its sandy reaches breaking;
For heart-joyance doth sometimes keep
From slumber, like heart-aching.

And I was glad that night,
With no reason ready,
To give my own heart for its deep delight,
That flowed like some tidal eddy
Or shone like a star that was rising bright
With comforting radiance steady.

But on a sudden—hark!
Music struck asunder
Those meshes of bliss, and I wept in the dark,
So sweet was the unseen wonder;
So swiftly it touched, as if struck at a mark
The trouble that joy kept under.

I rose—the moon outshone:
I saw the sea heaving,
And a little vessel sailing alone,
The small crisp wavelet cleaving;
'Twas she as she sailed to her port unknown—
Was that track of sweetness leaving.

We know they music made
In heaven, ere man's creation;
But when God threw it down to us that strayed,
It dropt with lamentation,
And ever since doth its sweetness shade
With sighs for its first station.

Its joy suggests regret—
  Its most for more is yearning;
And it brings to the soul that its voice hath met,
  No rest that cadence learning,
But a conscious part in the sighs that fret
  Its nature for returning.

O Eve, sweet Eve! methought
  When sometimes comfort winning,
As she watched the first children's tender sport
  Sole joy born since her sinning,
If a bird anear them sang, it brought
  The pang as at beginning.

While swam the unshed tear,
  Her prattlers little heeding,
Would murmur, 'This bird, with its carol clear,
  When the red clay was kneaden,
And God made Adam our father dear,
  Sang to him thus in Eden.'

The moon went in—the sky
  And earth and sea hiding,
I laid me down, with the yearning sigh
  Of that strain in my heart abiding;
I slept, and the barque that had sailed so nigh
  In my dream was ever gliding

I slept, but waked amazed,
  With sudden noise frighted,
And voices without, and a flash that dazed
  Mine eyes from candles lighted.
'Ah! surely,' methought, 'by these shouts upraised.
  Some travellers are benighted.'

A voice was at my side—
 'Waken, madam, waken!
The long-prayed-for ship at her anchor doth ride.
 Let the child from its rest be taken,
For the captain doth weary for babe and for bride—
 Waken, madam, waken!

'The home you left but late,
 He speeds to it light-hearted;
By the wires he sent this news, and straight
 To you with it they started.'
O joy for a yearning heart too great,
 O union for the parted!

We rose up in the night,
 The morning star was shining;
We carried the child in its slumber light
 Out by the myrtles twining:
Orion over the sea hung bright,
 And glorious in declining.

Mother, to meet her son,
 Smiled first, then wept the rather;
And wife, to bind up those links undone,
 And cherished words to gather,
And to show the face of her little one,
 That had never seen its father.

That cottage in a chine,
 We were not to behold it;
But there may the purest of sunbeams shine,
 May freshest flowers enfold it,
For sake of the news which our hearts must twine
 With the bower where we were told it!

Now oft, left lone again,
  Sit mother and sit daughter;
They bless the good ship that sailed over the main,
  And the favouring wind that brought her;
While still some new beauty they fable and feign
  For the cottage by the water.

SCHOLAR AND CARPENTER.

WHILE ripening corn grew thick and deep,
And here and there men stood to reap,
One morn I put my heart to sleep,
And to the lanes I took my way.
The goldfinch on a thistle-head
Stood scattering seedlets while she fed;
The wrens their pretty gossip spread,
Or joined a random roundelay.

On hanging cobwebs shone the dew,
And thick the wayside clovers grew;
The feeding bee had much to do,
So fast did honey-drops exude:
She sucked and murmured, and was gone,
And lit on other blooms anon,
The while I learnt a lesson on
The source and sense of quietude.

For sheep-bells chiming from a wold,
Or bleat of lamb within its fold,
Or cooing of love-legends old
To dove-wives make not quiet less;
Ecstatic chirp of wingèd thing,
Or bubbling of the water-spring,
Are sounds that more than silence bring
Itself and its delightsomeness.

While thus I went to gladness fain,
I had but walked a mile or twain
Before my heart woke up again,
As dreaming she had slept too late:
The morning freshness that she viewed
With her own meaning she endued,
And touched with her solicitude
The natures she did meditate.

'If quiet is, for it I wait;
To it, ah! let me wed my fate,
And, like a sad wife, supplicate
My roving lord no more to flee;
If leisure is—but, ah! 'tis not—
'Tis long past praying for, God wot;
The fashion of it men forgot,
About the age of chivalry.

'Sweet is the leisure of the bird;
She craves no time for work deferred;
Her wings are not to aching stirred
Providing for her helpless ones.
Fair is the leisure of the wheat;
All night the damps about it fleet;
All day it basketh in the heat,
And grows and whispers orisons.

'Grand is the leisure of the earth;
She gives her happy myriads birth,
And after harvest fears not dearth,
But goes to sleep in snow-wreaths dim.
Dread is the leisure up above
The while He sits whose name is Love,
And waits, as Noah did, for the dove,
To wit if she would fly to him.

'He waits for us, while, houseless things,
We beat about with bruisèd wings
On the dark floods and water-springs,
The ruined world, the desolate sea;
With open windows from the prime
All night, all day, He waits sublime,
Until the fulness of the time
Decreed from His eternity.

'Where is OUR leisure?—Give us rest.
Where is the quiet we possessed?
We must have had it once—were blest
With peace whose phantoms yet entice.
Sorely the mother of mankind
Longed for the garden left behind;
For we prove yet some yearnings blind
Inherited from Paradise.'

'Hold, heart!' I cried; 'for trouble sleeps:
I hear no sound of aught that weeps;
I will not look into thy deeps—
I am afraid, I am afraid!'
'Afraid!' she saith; 'and yet 'tis true
That what man dreads he still should view—
Should do the thing he fears to do,
And storm the ghosts in ambuscade.'

'What good?' I sigh. 'Was reason meant
To straighten branches that are bent,
Or soothe an ancient discontent,
The instinct of a race dethroned?
Ah! doubly should that instinct go
Must the four rivers cease to flow,
Nor yield those rumours sweet and low
Wherewith man's life is undertoned.'

'Yet had I but the past,' she cries,
'And it was lost, I would arise
And comfort me some other wise.
  But more than loss about me clings:
I am but restless with my race;
The whispers from a heavenly place,
Once dropped among us, seem to chase
  Rest with their prophet-visitings.

'The race is like a child; as yet
Too young for all things to be set
Plainly before him with no let
  Or hindrance meet for his degree;
But ne'ertheless by much too old
Not to perceive that men withhold
More of the story than is told,
  And so infer a mystery.

'If the Celestials daily fly
With messages on missions high,
And float, our masts and turrets nigh,
  Conversing on Heaven's great intents;
What wonder hints of coming things,
Whereto man's hope and yearning clings,
Should drop like feathers from their wings
  And give us vague presentiments?

And as the waxing moon can take
The tidal waters in her wake
And lead them round and round to break
  Obedient to her drawings dim;
So may the movements of His mind,
The first Great Father of mankind,
Affect with answering movements blind,
  And draw the souls that breathe by Him.

'We had a message long ago
That like a river peace should flow,
And Eden bloom again below.
  We heard, and we began to wait:
Full soon that message men forgot;
Yet waiting is their destined lot,
And waiting for they know not what
  They strive with yearnings passionate.

'Regret and faith alike enchain;
There was a loss, there comes a gain;
We stand at fault betwixt the twain,
  And that is veiled for which we pant.
Our lives are short, our ten times seven;
We think the councils held in heaven
Sit long, ere yet that blissful leaven
  Work peace amongst the militant.

'Then we blame God that sin should be:
Adam began it at the tree,
"The woman whom THOU gavest me;"
  And we adopt his dark device.
O long Thou tarriest! come and reign
And bring forgiveness in Thy train,
And give us in our hands again
  The apples of Thy Paradise.'

'Far-seeing heart! if that be all,
The happy things that did not fall,'
I sighed, 'from every coppice call
  They never from that garden went.
Behold their joy, so comfort thee,
Behold the blossom and the bee,
For they are yet as good and free
  As when poor Eve was innocent.

'But reason thus: "If we sank low,
If the lost garden we forego,
Each in his day, nor ever know
But in our poet souls its face;
Yet we may rise until we reach
A height untold of in its speech—
A lesson that it could not teach
Learn in this darker dwelling-place."

'And reason on: "We take the spoil;
Loss made us poets, and the soil
Taught us great patience in our toil,
And life is kin to God through death.
Christ were not One with us but so,
And if bereft of Him we go;
Dearer the heavenly mansions grow,
His home, to man that wandereth."

'Content thee so, and ease thy smart.'
With that she slept again, my heart,
And I admired and took my part
With crowds of happy things the while:
With open velvet butterflies
That swung and spread their peacock eyes,
As if they cared no more to rise
From off their beds of camomile.

The blackcaps in an orchard met,
Praising the berries while they ate;
The finch that flew her beak to whet
Before she joined them on the tree;
The water-mouse among the reeds—
His bright eyes glancing black as beads,
So happy with a bunch of seeds—
I felt their gladness heartily.

But I came on, I smelt the hay,
And up the hills I took my way,
And down them still made holiday,
  And walked, and wearied not a whit;
But ever with the lane I went
Until it dropped with steep descent,
Cut deep into the rock, a tent
  Of maple branches roofing it.

Adown the rock small runlets wept,
And reckless ivies leaned and crept,
And little spots of sunshine slept
  On its brown steeps and made them fair;
And broader beams athwart it shot,
Where martins cheeped in many a knot,
For they had ta'en a sandy plot
  And scooped another Petra there.

And deeper down, hemmed in and hid
From upper light and life amid
The swallows gossiping, I thrid
  Its mazes, till the dipping land
Sank to the level of my lane:
That was the last hill of the chain,
And fair below I saw the plain
  That seemed cold cheer to reprimand.

Half-drowned in sleepy peace it lay,
As satiate with the boundless play
Of sunshine on its green array.
  And clear-cut hills of gloomy blue
To keep it safe rose up behind,
As with a charmèd ring to bind
The grassy sea, where clouds might find
  A place to bring their shadows to.

I said, and blest that pastoral grace,
'How sweet thou art, thou sunny place!
Thy God approves thy smiling face:'
  But straight my heart put in her word;
She said, 'Albeit thy face I bless,
There have been times, sweet wilderness,
When I have wished to love thee less,
  Such pangs thy smile administered.'

But, lo! I reached a field of wheat,
And by its gate full clear and sweet
A workman sang, while at his feet
  Played a young child, all life and stir—
A three years' child, with rosy lip,
Who in the song had partnership,
Made happy with each falling chip
  Dropped by the busy carpenter.

This, reared a new gate for the old,
And loud the tuneful measure rolled,
But stopped as I came up to hold
  Some kindly talk of passing things.
Brave were his eyes, and frank his mien;
Of all men's faces, calm or keen,
A better I have never seen
  In all my lonely wanderings.

And how it was I scarce can tell,
We seemed to please each other well;
I lingered till a noonday bell
  Had sounded, and his task was done.
An oak had screened us from the heat;
And 'neath it in the standing wheat,
A cradle and a fair retreat,
  Full sweetly slept the little one.

The workman rested from his stroke,
And manly were the words he spoke,
Until the smiling babe awoke
  And prayed to him for milk and food.
Then to a runlet forth he went,
And brought a wallet from the bent,
And bade me to the meal, intent
  I should not quit his neighbourhood.

'For here,' said he, 'are bread and beer,
And meat enough to make good cheer;
Sir, eat with me, and have no fear,
  For none upon my work depend,
Saving this child; and I may say
That I am rich, for every day
I put by somewhat; therefore stay,
  And to such eating condescend.'

We ate. The child—child fair to see—
Began to cling about his knee,
And he down leaning fatherly
  Received some softly-prattled prayer;
He smiled as if to list were balm,
And with his labour-hardened palm
Pushed from the baby-forehead calm
  Those shining locks that clustered there.

The rosy mouth made fresh essay—
'O would he sing, or would he play?'
I looked, my thought would make its way—
  'Fair is your child of face and limb,
The round blue eyes full sweetly shine.'
He answered me with glance benign—
'Ay, Sir; but he is none of mine,
  Although I set great store by him.'

With that, as if his heart was fain
To open—nathless not complain—
He let my quiet questions gain
  His story: 'Not of kin to me,'
Repeating; 'but asleep, awake,
For worse, for better, him I take,
To cherish for my dead wife's sake,
  And count him as her legacy.

'I married with the sweetest lass
That ever stepped on meadow grass;
That ever at her looking-glass
  Some pleasure took, some natural care;
That ever swept a cottage floor
And worked all day, nor e'er gave o'er
Till eve, then watched beside the door
  Till her good man should meet her there.

'But I lost all in its fresh prime;
My wife fell ill before her time—
Just as the bells began to chime
  One Sunday morn. By next day's light
Her little babe was born and dead,
And she, unconscious what she said,
With feeble hands about her spread,
  Sought it with yearnings infinite.

'With mother-longing still beguiled,
And lost in fever-fancies wild,
She piteously bemoaned her child
  That we had stolen, she said, away.
And ten sad days she sighed to me,
"I cannot rest until I see
My pretty one! I think that he
  Smiled in my face but yesterday."

'Then she would change, and faintly try
To sing some tender lullaby;
And "Ah!" would moan, "if I should die,
Who, sweetest babe, would cherish thee?"
Then weep, "My pretty boy is grown;
With tender feet on the cold stone
He stands, for he can stand alone,
And no one leads him motherly."

'Then she with dying movements slow
Would seem to knit, or seem to sew:
"His feet are bare, he must not go
Unshod:" and as her death drew on,
"O little baby," she would sigh;
"My little child, I cannot die
Till I have you to slumber nigh—
You, you to set mine eyes upon."

'When she spake thus, and moaning lay,
They said, "She cannot pass away,
So sore she longs:" and as the day
Broke on the hills, I left her side.
Mourning along this lane I went;
Some travelling folk had pitched their tent
Up yonder: there a woman, bent
With age, sat meanly canopied.

'A twelvemonths' child was at her side:
"Whose infant may that be?" I cried.
"His that will own him," she replied;
"His mother's dead, no worse could be."
"Since you can give—or else I erred—
See, you are taken at your word,"
Quoth I; "that child is mine; I heard,
And own him! Rise, and give him me."

'She rose amazed, but cursed me too:
She could not hold such luck for true,
But gave him soon, with small ado.
  I laid him by my Lucy's side:
Close to her face that baby crept,
And stroked it, and the sweet soul wept;
Then, while upon her arm he slept,
  She passed, for she was satisfied.

'I loved her well, I wept her sore,
And when her funeral left my door
I thought that I should nevermore
  Feel any pleasure near me glow;
But I have learned, though this I had,
'Tis sometimes natural to be glad,
And no man can be always sad
  Unless he wills to have it so.

'Oh, I had heavy nights at first,
And daily wakening was the worst:
For then my grief arose, and burst
  Like something fresh upon my head.
Yet when less keen it seemed to grow,
I was not pleased—I wished to go
Mourning adown this vale of woe
  For all my life uncomforted.

'I grudged myself the lightsome air,
That makes man cheerful unaware;
When comfort came, I did not care
  To take it in, to feel it stir:
And yet God took with me His plan,
And now for my appointed span
I think I am a happier man
  For having wed and wept for her.

'Because no natural tie remains,
On this small thing I spend my gains;
God makes me love him for my pains,
And binds me so to wholesome care:
I would not lose from my past life
That happy year, that happy wife!
Yet now I wage no useless strife
With feelings blithe and debonair.

'I have the courage to be gay,
Although she lieth lapped away
Under the daisies, for I say,
"Thou wouldst be glad if thou couldst see:"
My constant thought makes manifest
I have not what I love the best,
But I must thank God for the rest
While I hold heaven a verity.'

He rose, upon his shoulder set
The child, and while with vague regret
We parted, pleased that we had met,
My heart did with herself confer;
With wholesome shame she did repent
Her reasonings idly eloquent,
And said, 'I might be more content:
But God go with the carpenter.'

THE HIGH TIDE ON THE COAST OF LINCOLNSHIRE.

(1571.)

THE old mayor climbed the belfry tower,
The ringers ran by two, by three;
'Pull, if ye never pulled before;
Good ringers, pull your best,' quoth he.
'Play uppe, play uppe, O Boston bells!
Ply all your changes, all your swells,
Play uppe "The Brides of Enderby.

Men say it was a stolen tyde—
The Lord that sent it, He knows all;
But in myne ears doth still abide
The message that the bells let fall:
And there was nought of strange, beside
The flights of mews and peewits pied
By millions crouched on the old sea wall.

I sat and spun within the doore,
My thread brake off, I raised myne eyes;
The level sun, like ruddy ore,
Lay sinking in the barren skies,
And dark against day's golden death
She moved where Lindis wandereth,
My sonne's faire wife, Elizabeth.

'Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!' calling,
Ere the early dews were falling,
Farre away I heard her song.
'Cusha! Cusha! all along
Where the reedy Lindis floweth,
Floweth, floweth;
From the meads where melick groweth
Faintly came her milking song—

'Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!' calling,
'For the dews will soone be falling;
Leave your meadow grasses mellow
Mellow, mellow;
Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow;
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,
Quit the stalks of parsley hollow,
Hollow, hollow;
Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
From the clovers lift your head;
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,
Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
Jetty, to the milking shed.'

If it be long, ay, long ago,
When I beginne to think howe long,
Againe I hear the Lindis flow,
Swift as an arrowe, sharpe and strong;
And all the aire, it seemeth mee,
Bin full of floating bells (sayth shee),
That ring the tune of Enderby.

Alle fresh the level pasture lay
And not a shadowe mote be seene,
Save where full fyve good miles away
The steeple towered from out the greene;

And lo! the great bell farre and wide
Was heard in all the country side
That Saturday at eventide.

The swanherds where their sedges are
  Moved on in sunset's golden breath,
The shepherde lads I heard afarre,
  And my sonne's wife, Elizabeth;
Till floating o'er the grassy sea
Came downe that kyndly message free.
The 'Brides of Mavis Enderby.'

Then some looked uppe into the sky,
  And all along where Lindis flows
To where the goodly vessels lie,
  And where the lordly steeple shows.
They sayde, 'And why should this thing be?
What danger lowers by land or sea?
They ring the tune of Enderby!

'For evil news from Mablethorpe,
  Of pyrate galleys warping down;
For shippes ashore beyond the scorpe,
  They have not spared to wake the towne:
But while the west bin red to see,
And storms be none, and pyrates flee,
Why ring "The Brides of Enderby"?'

I looked without, and lo! my sonne
  Came riding downe with might and main:
He raised a shout as he drew on,
  Till all the welkin rang again,
'Elizabeth! Elizabeth!'
(A sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.)

'The olde sea wall (he cried) is downe,
  The rising tide comes on apace,
And boats adrift in yonder towne
  Go sailing uppe the market-place.'
He shook as one that looks on death:
'God save you, mother!' straight he saith;
'Where is my wife, Elizabeth?'

'Good sonne, where Lindis winds away,
  With her two bairns I marked her long;
And ere yon bells beganne to play
  Afar I heard her milking song.'
He looked across the grassy lea,
To right, to left, 'Ho Enderby!'
They rang 'The Brides of Enderby!'

With that he cried and beat his breast;
  For, lo! along the river's bed
A mighty eygre reared his crest,
  And uppe the Lindis raging sped,
It swept with thunderous noises loud;
Shaped like a curling snow-white cloud,
Or like a demon in a shroud.

And rearing Lindis backward pressed
  Shook all her trembling bankes amaine;
Then madly at the eygre's breast
  Flung uppe her weltering walls again.
Then bankes came downe with ruin and rout—
Then beaten foam flew round about—
Then all the mighty floods were out.

So farre, so fast the eygre drave,
  The heart had hardly time to beat,
Before a shallow seething wave
  Sobbed in the grasses at oure feet:
The feet had hardly time to flee
Before it brake against the knee,
And all the world was in the sea.

Upon the roofe we sate that night,
  The noise of bells went sweeping by;
I marked the lofty beacon light
  Stream from the church tower, red and high-
A lurid mark and dread to see;
And awsome bells they were to mee,
That in the dark rang 'Enderby.'

They rang the sailor lads to guide
  From roofe to roofe who fearless rowed;
And I—my sonne was at my side,
  And yet the ruddy beacon glowed;
And yet he moaned beneath his breath,
'O come in life, or come in death!
O lost! my love, Elizabeth.'

And didst thou visit him no more?
  Thou didst, thou didst, my daughter deare;
The waters laid thee at his doore,
  Ere yet the early dawn was clear.
Thy pretty bairns in fast embrace,
The lifted sun shone on thy face,
Downe drifted to thy dwelling-place.

That flow strewed wrecks about the grass,
  That ebbe swept out the flocks to sea;
A fatal ebbe and flow, alas!
  To manye more than myne and mee:
But each will mourn his own (she saith),
And sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.

I shall never hear her more
By the reedy Lindis shore,
'Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!' calling
Ere the early dews be falling;
I shall never hear her song,
'Cusha! Cusha!' all along
Where the sunny Lindis floweth,
    Goeth, floweth;
From the meads where melick groweth
When the water winding down,
Onward floweth to the town.

I shall never see her more
Where the reeds and rushes quiver,
    Shiver, quiver;
Stand beside the sobbing river,
Sobbing, throbbing, in its falling
To the sandy lonesome shore;
I shall never hear her calling,

'Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
    Mellow, mellow;
Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow;
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot;
Quit your pipes of parsley hollow,
    Hollow, hollow;

Come uppe Lightfoot, rise and follow ;
Lightfoot, Whitefoot,
From your clovers lift the head ;
Come uppe Jetty, follow, follow,
Jetty, to the milking shed.'

WHEN SPARROWS BUILD.

WHEN sparrows build, and the leaves break forth,
My old sorrow wakes and cries,
For I know there is dawn in the far, far north,
And a scarlet sun doth rise ;
Like a scarlet fleece the snow-field spreads,
And the icy founts run free,
And the bergs begin to bow their heads,
And plunge, and sail in the sea.

O my lost love, and my own, own love,
And my love that loved me so !
Is there never a chink in the world above
Where they listen for words from below?
Nay, I spoke once, and I grieved thee sore,
I remember all that I said,
And now thou wilt hear me no more—no more
Till the sea gives up her dead.

Thou didst set thy foot on the ship, and sail
To the ice-fields and the snow ;
Thou wert sad, for thy love did nought avail,
At the end I could not know ;

How could I tell I should love thee to-day,
  Whom that day I held not dear?
How could I know I should love thee away
  When I did not love thee anear?

We shall walk no more through the sodden plain
  With the faded bents o'erspread,
We shall stand no more by the seething main
  While the dark wrack drives o'erhead;
We shall part no more in the wind and the rain
  Where thy last farewell was said;
But perhaps I shall meet thee and know thee again
  When the sea gives up her dead.

SONGS OF SEVEN.

SEVEN TIMES ONE. EXULTATION.

THERE'S no dew left on the daisies and clover,
  There's no rain left in heaven:
I've said my 'seven times' over and over,
  Seven times one are seven.

I am old, so old, I can write a letter;
  My birthday lessons are done:
The lambs play always, they know no better;
  They are only one times one.

O moon! in the night I have seen you sailing
  And shining so round and low;
You were bright! ah bright! but your light is failing—
  You are nothing now but a bow.

You moon, have you done something wrong in heaven
  That God has hidden your face?
I hope if you have you will soon be forgiven,
  And shine again in your place.

O velvet bee, you're a dusty fellow,
  You've powdered your legs with gold!
O brave marsh marybuds, rich and yellow,
  Give me your money to hold!

O columbine, open your folded wrapper,
Where two twin turtle-doves dwell!
O cuckoopint, toll me the purple clapper
That hangs in your clear green bell!

And show me your nest with the young ones in it;
I will not steal them away;
I am old! you may trust me, linnet, linnet—
I am seven times one to-day.

SEVEN TIMES TWO. ROMANCE.

You bells in the steeple, ring, ring out your changes,
How many soever they be,
And let the brown meadow-lark's note as he ranges
Come over, come over to me.

Yet bird's clearest carol by fall or by swelling
No magical sense conveys,
And bells have forgotten their old art of telling
The fortune of future days.

'Turn again, turn again,' once they rang cheerily,
While a boy listened alone;
Made his heart yearn again, musing so wearily
All by himself on a stone.

Poor bells! I forgive you; your good days are over,
And mine, they are yet to be;
No listening, no longing, shall aught, aught discover:
You leave the story to me.

The foxglove shoots out of the green matted heather,
  Preparing her hoods of snow ;
She was idle, and slept till the sunshiny weather :
  O, children take long to grow.

I wish, and I wish that the spring would go faster,
  Nor long summer bide so late ;
And I could grow on like the foxglove and aster,
  For some things are ill to wait.

I wait for the day when dear hearts shall discover,
  While dear hands are laid on my head ;
'The child is a woman, the book may close over,
  For all the lessons are said.'

I wait for my story—the birds cannot sing it,
  Not one, as he sits on the tree ;
The bells cannot ring it, but long years, O bring it !
  Such as I wish it to be.

SEVEN TIMES THREE. LOVE.

I leaned out of window, I smelt the white clover,
  Dark, dark was the garden, I saw not the gate ;
'Now, if there be footsteps, he comes, my one lover—
  Hush, nightingale, hush ! O, sweet nightingale, wait
      Till I listen and hear
      If a step draweth near,
      For my love he is late !

'The skies in the darkness stoop nearer and nearer,
A cluster of stars hangs like fruit in the tree,
The fall of the water comes sweeter, comes clearer:
To what art thou listening, and what dost thou see?
Let the star-clusters grow,
Let the sweet waters flow,
And cross quickly to me.

'You night moths that hover where honey brims over
From sycamore blossoms, or settle or sleep;
You glowworms, shine out, and the pathway discover
To him that comes darkling along the rough steep.
Ah, my sailor, make haste,
For the time runs to waste,
And my love lieth deep—

'Too deep for swift telling; and yet, my one lover,
I've conned thee an answer, it waits thee to-night.'
By the sycamore passed he, and through the white clover,
Then all the sweet speech I had fashioned took flight;
But I'll love him more, more
Than e'er wife loved before,
Be the days dark or bright.

SEVEN TIMES FOUR. MATERNITY.

Heigh ho! daisies and buttercups,
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall!
When the wind wakes how they rock in the grasses,
And dance with the cuckoo-buds slender and small!
Here's two bonny boys, and here's mother's own lasses,
Eager to gather them all.

Heigh ho! daisies and buttercups!
  Mother shall thread them a daisy chain;
Sing them a song of the pretty hedge-sparrow,
  That loved her brown little ones, loved them full fain:
Sing, 'Heart, thou art wide though the house be but
    narrow'—
      Sing once, and sing it again.

Heigh ho! daisies and buttercups,
  Sweet wagging cowslips, they bend and they bow;
A ship sails afar over warm ocean waters,
  And haply one musing doth stand at her prow.
O bonny brown sons, and O sweet little daughters,
      Maybe he thinks on you now!

Heigh ho! daisies and buttercups,
  Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall—
A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure,
  And fresh hearts unconscious of sorrow and thrall!
Send down on their pleasure smiles passing its measure,
      God that is over us all!

SEVEN TIMES FIVE. WIDOWHOOD.

I sleep and rest, my heart makes moan
  Before I am well awake;
'Let me bleed! O let me alone,
  Since I must not break!'

For children wake, though fathers sleep
  With a stone at foot and at head:
O sleepless God, for ever keep,
  Keep both living and dead!

I lift mine eyes, and what to see
But a world happy and fair!
I have not wished it to mourn with me—
Comfort is not there.

O what anear but golden brooms,
And a waste of reedy rills!
O what afar but the fine glooms
On the rare blue hills!

I shall not die, but live forlore—
How bitter it is to part!
O to meet thee, my love, once more!
O my heart, my heart!

No more to hear, no more to see!
O that an echo might wake
And waft one note of thy psalm to me
Ere my heart-strings break!

I should know it how faint soe'er,
And with angel voices blent;
O once to feel thy spirit anear;
I could be content!

Or once between the gates of gold,
While an entering angel trod.
But once—thee sitting to behold
On the hills of God!

SEVEN TIMES SIX. GIVING IN MARRIAGE.

To bear, to nurse, to rear,
To watch, and then to lose:
To see my bright ones disappear,
Drawn up like morning dews—

To bear, to nurse, to rear,
  To watch, and then to lose:
This have I done when God drew near
  Among His own to choose.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
  And with thy lord depart
In tears that he, as soon as shed,
  Will let no longer smart.—
To hear, to heed, to wed,
  This while thou didst I smiled,
For now it was not God who said,
  'Mother, give ME thy child.'

O fond, O fool, and blind,
  To God I gave with tears;
But when a man like grace would find,
  My soul put by her fears—
O fond, O fool, and blind,
  God guards in happier spheres;
That man will guard where he did bind
  Is hope for unknown years.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
  Fair lot that maidens choose,
Thy mother's tenderest words are said,
  Thy face no more she views;
Thy mother's lot, my dear,
  She doth in nought accuse;
Her lot to bear, to nurse, to rear,
  To love—and then to lose.

SEVEN TIMES SEVEN. LONGING FOR HOME.

I.

A song of a boat:—
There was once a boat on a billow:
Lightly she rocked to her port remote,
And the foam was white in her wake like snow,
And her frail mast bowed when the breeze would blow
And bent like a wand of willow.

II.

I shaded mine eyes one day when a boat
Went curtseying over the billow,
I marked her course till a dancing mote
She faded out on the moonlit foam,
And I stayed behind in the dear loved home;
And my thoughts all day were about the boat
And my dreams upon the pillow.

III.

I pray you hear my song of a boat,
For it is but short:—
My boat, you shall find none fairer afloat,
In river or port.
Long I looked out for the lad she bore,
On the open desolate sea,
And I think he sailed to the heavenly shore,
For he came not back to me—
Ah me!

IV.

A song of a nest:—
There was once a nest in a hollow:
Down in the mosses and knot-grass pressed,
Soft and warm, and full to the brim—
Vetches leaned over it purple and dim,
With buttercup buds to follow.

V.

I pray you hear my song of a nest,
For it is not long:—
You shall never light, in a summer quest
The bushes among—
Shall never light on a prouder sitter,
A fairer nestful, nor ever know
A softer sound than their tender twitter,
That wind-like did come and go.

VI.

I had a nestful once of my own,
Ah happy, happy I!
Right dearly I loved them: but when they were grown
They spread out their wings to fly—
O, one after one they flew away
Far up to the heavenly blue,
To the better country, the upper day,
And—I wish I was going too.

VII.

I pray you, what is the nest to me,
My empty nest?
And what is the shore where I stood to see
My boat sail down to the west?

Can I call that home where I anchor yet,
    Though my good man has sailed?
Can I call that home where my nest was set,
    Now all its hope hath failed?
Nay, but the port where my sailor went,
    And the land where my nestlings be:
There is the home where my thoughts are sent,
    The only home for me—
                        Ah me!

WINSTANLEY.

THE APOLOGY.

QUOTH the cedar to the reeds and rushes,
'Water-grass, you know not what I do;
Know not of my storms, nor of my hushes,
And—I know not you.'

Quoth the reeds and rushes, 'Wind! O waken!
Breathe, O wind, and set our answer free,
For we have no voice, of you forsaken,
For the cedar tree.'

Quoth the earth at midnight to the ocean,
'Wilderness of water, lost to view,
Nought you are to me but sounds of motion;
I am nought to you.'

Quoth the ocean, 'Dawn! O fairest, clearest,
Touch me with thy golden fingers bland;
For I have no smile till thou appearest
For the lovely land.'

Quoth the hero dying, whelmed in glory,
'Many blame me, few have understood;
Ah, my folk, to you I leave a story—
Make its meaning good.'

Quoth the folk, 'Sing, poet! teach us, prove us;
Surely we shall learn the meaning then:
Wound us with a pain divine, O move us,
For this man of men.'

WINSTANLEY's deed, you kindly folk,
With it I fill my lay,
And a nobler man ne'er walked the world,
Let his name be what it may.

The good ship 'Snowdrop' tarried long,
Up at the vane looked he;
'Belike,' he said, for the wind had dropped,
'She lieth becalmed at sea.'

The lovely ladies flocked within,
And still would each one say,
'Good mercer, be the ships come up?'
But still he answered 'Nay.'

Then stepped two mariners down the street,
With looks of grief and fear:
'Now, if Winstanley be your name,
We bring you evil cheer.

'For the good ship "Snowdrop" struck—she struck
On the rock—the Eddystone,
And down she went with threescore men,
We two being left alone.

'Down in the deep, with freight and crew,
Past any help she lies,
And never a bale has come to shore
Of all thy merchandise.'

'For cloth o' gold and comely frieze,'
  Winstanley said, and sighed,
'For velvet coif, or costly coat,
  They fathoms deep may bide.

'O thou brave skipper, blithe and kind,
  O mariners bold and true,
Sorry at heart, right sorry am I,
  A-thinking of yours and you.

'Many long days Winstanley's breast
  Shall feel a weight within,
For a waft of wind he shall be 'feard
  And trading count but sin.

'To him no more it shall be joy
  To pace the cheerful town,
And see the lovely ladies gay
  Step on in velvet gown.'

The 'Snowdrop' sank at Lammas-tide,
  All under the yeasty spray;
On Christmas Eve the brig 'Content'
  Was also cast away.

He little thought o' New Year's night,
  So jolly as he sat then,
While drank the toast and praised the roast
  The round-faced Aldermen,—

While serving-lads ran to and fro
  Pouring the ruby wine,
And jellies trembled on the board,
  And towering pasties fine,—

While loud huzzas ran up the roof,
Till the lamps did rock o'erhead,
And holly-boughs from rafters hung
Dropped down their berries red,—

He little thought on Plymouth Hoe,
With every rising tide,
How the wave washed in his sailor lads,
And laid them side by side.

There stepped a stranger to the board:
'Now, stranger, who be ye?'
He looked to right, he looked to left,
And 'Rest you merry,' quoth he;

'For you did not see the brig go down,
Or ever a storm had blown;
For you did not see the white wave rear
At the rock—the Eddystone.

'She drave at the rock with sternsails set;
Crash went the masts in twain;
She staggered back with her mortal blow,
Then leaped at it again.

'There rose a great cry, bitter and strong,
The misty moon looked out!
And the water swarmed with seamen's heads,
And the wreck was strewed about.

'I saw her mainsail lash the sea
As I clung to the rock alone;
Then she heeled over, and down she went,
And sank like any stone.

'She was a fair ship, but all's one!
For nought could bide the shock.'
'I will take horse,' Winstanley said,
'And see this deadly rock.'

'For never again shall barque o' mine
Sail over the windy sea,
Unless, by the blessing of God, for this
Be found a remedy.'

Winstanley rode to Plymouth town
All in the sleet and the snow,
And he looked around on shore and sound
As he stood on Plymouth Hoe.

Till a pillar of spray rose far away,
And shot up its stately head,
Reared and fell over, and reared again:
"'Tis the rock! the rock!' he said.

Straight to the Mayor he took his way:
'Good Master Mayor,' quoth he,
'I am a mercer of London town,
And owner of vessels three,—

'But for your rock of dark renown,
I had five to track the main.'
'You are one of many,' the old Mayor said,
'That on the rock complain.

'An ill rock, mercer! your words ring right,
Well with my thoughts they chime,
For my two sons to the world to come
It sent before their time.'

'Lend me a lighter, good Master Mayor,
And a score of shipwrights free,
For I think to raise a lantern tower
On this rock o' destiny.'

The old Mayor laughed, but sighed alsò;
'Ah, youth,' quoth he, 'is rash;
Sooner, young man, thou'lt root it out
From the sea that doth it lash.

'Who sails too near its jagged teeth,
He shall have evil lot;
For the calmest seas that tumble there
Froth like a boiling pot.

'And the heavier seas few look on nigh,
But straight they lay him dead;
A seventy-gun ship, sir!—they'll shoot
Higher than her mast-head.

'O, beacons sighted in the dark,
They are right welcome things,
And pitchpots flaming on the shore
Show fair as angel wings.

'Hast gold in hand? then light the land,
It 'longs to thee and me;
But let alone the deadly rock
In God Almighty's sea.'

Yet said he, 'Nay—I must away,
On the rock to set my feet;
My debts are paid, my will I made,
Or ever I did thee greet.

'If I must die, then let me die
By the rock, and not elsewhere;
If I may live, O let me live
To mount my lighthouse stair.'

The old Mayor looked him in the face,
And answered: 'Have thy way;
Thy heart is stout, as if round about
It was braced with an iron stay:

'Have thy will, mercer! choose thy men,
Put off from the storm-rid shore;
God with thee be, or I shall see
Thy face and theirs no more.'

Heavily plunged the breaking wave,
And foam flew up the lea,
Morning and even the drifted snow
Fell into the dark grey sea.

Winstanley chose him men and gear;
He said, 'My time I waste,'
For the seas ran seething up the shore,
And the wrack drave on in haste.

But twenty days he waited and more,
Pacing the strand alone,
Or ever he set his manly foot
On the rock—the Eddystone.

Then he and the sea began their strife,
And worked with power and might:
Whatever the man reared up by day
The sea broke down by night.

He wrought at ebb with bar and beam,
   He sailed to shore at flow;
And at his side, by that same tide,
   Come bar and beam alsò.

'Give in, give in,' the old Mayor cried,
   'Or thou wilt rue the day.'
'Yonder he goes,' the townsfolk sighed,
   'But the rock will have its way.

'For all his looks that are so stout,
   And his speeches brave and fair,
He may wait on the wind, wait on the wave,
   But he'll build no lighthouse there.'

In fine weather and foul weather
   The rock his arts did flout,
Through the long days and the short days,
   Till all that year ran out.

With fine weather and foul weather
   Another year came in:
'To take his wage,' the workmen said,
   'We almost count a sin.'

Now March was gone, came April in,
   And a sea-fog settled down,
And forth sailed he on a glassy sea,
   He sail'd from Plymouth town.

With men and stores he put to sea,
   As he was wont to do;
They showed in the fog like ghosts full faint–
   A ghostly craft and crew.

And the sea-fog lay and waxed alway,
  For a long eight days and more;
'God help our men!' quoth the women then;
  'For they bide long from shore.'

They paced the Hoe in doubt and dread:
  'Where may our mariners be?'
But the brooding fog lay soft as down
  Over the quiet sea.

A Scottish schooner made the port,
  The thirteenth day at e'en:
'As I am a man,' the captain cried,
  'A strange sight I have seen:

'And a strange sound heard, my masters all,
  At sea, in the fog and the rain,
Like shipwrights' hammers tapping low,
  Then loud, then low again.

'And a stately house one instant showed,
  Through a rift, on the vessel's lee:
What manner of creatures may be those
  That build upon the sea?'

Then sighed the folk, 'The Lord be praised!
  And they flocked to the shore amain;
All over the Hoe that livelong night,
  Many stood out in the rain.

It ceased, and the red sun reared his head,
  And the rolling fog did flee;
And, lo! in the offing faint and far
  Winstanley's house at sea!

In fair weather with mirth and cheer
  The stately tower uprose;
In foul weather, with hunger and cold,
  They were content to close;

Till up the stair Winstanley went,
  To fire the wick afar;
And Plymouth in the silent night
  Look'd out, and saw her star.

Winstanley set his foot ashore:
  Said he, 'My work is done;
I hold it strong to last as long
  As aught beneath the sun.

'But if it fail, as fail it may,
  Borne down with ruin and rout,
Another than I shall rear it high,
  And brace the girders stout.

'A better than I shall rear it high,
  For now the way is plain,
And though I were dead,' Winstanley said,
  'The light would shine again,

'Yet were I fain still to remain,
  Watch in my tower to keep,
And tend my light in the stormiest night
  That ever did move the deep;

'And if it stood, why then 'twere good,
  Amid their tremulous stirs,
To count each stroke when the mad waves broke,
  For cheers of mariners.

'But if it fell, then this were well,
That I should with it fall;
Since, for my part, I have built my heart
In the courses of its wall.

'Ay! I were fain, long to remain,
Watch in my tower to keep,
And tend my light in the stormiest night
That ever did move the deep.'

With that Winstanley went his way,
And left the rock renowned,
And summer and winter his pilot star
Hung bright o'er Plymouth Sound.

But it fell out, fell out at last,
That he would put to sea,
To scan once more his lighthouse tower
On the rock o' destiny.

And the winds woke, and the storm broke,
And wrecks came plunging in;
None in the town that night lay down
Or sleep or rest to win.

The great mad waves were rolling graves,
And each flung up its dead;
The seething flow was white below,
And black the sky o'erhead.

And when the dawn, the dull, grey dawn,
Broke on the trembling town,
And men looked south to the harbour mouth,
The lighthouse tower was down.

Down in the deep where he doth sleep,
  Who made it shine afar,
And then in the night that drowned its light,
  Set, with his pilot star.

Many fair tombs in the glorious glooms
  At Westminster they show;
The brave and the great lie there in state:
  Winstanley lieth low.

NOT IN VAIN I WAITED.

SHE was but a child, a child,
    And I a man grown;
  Sweet she was, and fresh, and wild,
    And, I thought, my own.
What could I do? The long grass groweth,
  The long wave floweth with a murmur on:
The why and the wherefore of it all who knoweth?
  Ere I thought to lose her she was grown—and gone.
This day or that day in warm spring weather,
The lamb that was tame will yearn to break its tether.
'But if the world wound thee,' I said, 'come back to me,
Down in the dell wishing—wishing, wishing for thee.'

The dews hang on the white may,
  Like a ghost it stands,
All in the dusk before day
  That folds the dim lands:

Dark fell the skies when once belated,
Sad, and sorrow-fated, I missed the sun;
But wake, heart, and sing, for not in vain I waited.
O clear, O solemn dawning, lo, the maid is won!
Sweet dews, dry early on the grass and clover,
Lest the bride wet her feet while she walks over;
Shine to-day, sunbeams, and make all fair to see:
Down the dell she's coming—coming, coming with me.

THE LONG WHITE SEAM.

AS I came round the harbour buoy,
The lights began to gleam,
No wave the land-locked water stirred,
The crags were white as cream;
And I marked my love by candle-light
Sewing her long white seam.
It's aye sewing ashore, my dear,
Watch and steer at sea,
It's reef and furl, and haul the line,
Set sail and think of thee.

I climbed to reach her cottage door;
O sweetly my love sings!
Like a shaft of light her voice breaks forth
My soul to meet it springs
As the shining water leaped of old,
When stirred by angel wings.
Aye longing to list anew,
Awake and in my dream,
But never a song she sang like this,
Sewing her long white seam.

Fair fall the lights, the harbour lights,
  That brought me in to thee,
And peace drop down on that low roof
  For the sight that I did see,
And the voice, my dear, that rang so clear
  All for the love of me.
    For O, for O, with brows bent low
      By the candle's flickering gleam,
    Her wedding gown it was she wrought,
      Sewing the long white seam.

SONG IN THREE PARTS.

THE white broom flatt'ring her flowers in calm June weather,
'O most sweet wear;
Forty-eight weeks of my life do none desire me
Four am I fair.

Quoth the brown bee,
'In thy white wear
Four thou art fair.
A mystery
Of honeyed snow
In scented air
The bee lines flow
Straight unto thee.
Great boon and bliss
All pure I wis,
And sweet to grow

Ay, so to give
That many live.
Now as for me,
I,' quoth the bee,
'Have not to give,
Through long hours sunny
Gathering I live:
Aye debonair
Sailing sweet air
After my fare,
Bee-bread and honey.
In thy deep coombe
O thou white broom,
Where no leaves shake,
Brake,
Bent nor clover,
I a glad rover
Thy calms partake.
While winds of might
From height to height
Go bodily over.
Till slanteth light,
And up the rise
Thy shadow lies,
A shadow of white,
A beauty-lender
Pathetic, tender.

Short is thy day?
Answer with "Nay,'
Longer the hours
That wear thy flowers

Than all dull, cold
Years manifold
That gift withhold.
A long liver,
O honey-giver,
Thou by all showing
Art made bestowing,
I envy not
Thy greater lot,
Nor thy white wear.
But, as for me,
I,' quoth the bee,
'Never am fair.'

II.

The nightingale lorn of his note in darkness brooding
Deeply and long,
'Two sweet months spake the heart to the heart. Alas! all's over,
O lost my song.'

One in the tree,
'Hush now! Let be:
The song at ending
Left my long tending
Over alsò.
Let be, let us go
Across the wan sea.
The little ones care not,
And I fare not,
Amiss with thee.

Thou hast sung all,
This hast thou had.
Love, be not sad;
It shall befall
Assuredly,
When the bush buddeth
And the bank studdeth—
Where grass is sweet
And damps do fleet,
Her delicate beds
With daisy heads
That the Stars Seven
Leaned down from heaven
Shall sparkling mark
In the warm dark
Thy most dear strain
Which ringeth aye true—
Piercing vale, croft
Lifted aloft
Dropt even as dew
With a sweet quest
To her on the nest
When damps we love
Fall from above,
"Art thou asleep?
Answer me, answer me,
Night is so deep
Thy right fair form
I cannot see;
Answer me, answer me,
Are the eggs warm?
Is't well with thee?"

Ay, this shall be
Assuredly.
Ay, thou full fain
In the soft rain
Shalt sing again.'

III.

A fair wife making her moan, despised, forsaken,
Her good days o'er;
'Seven sweet years of my life did I live belovèd,
Seven—no more.'

Then Echo woke—and spoke,
'No more—no more.'
And a wave broke
On the sad shore
When Echo said
'No more.'
Nought else made reply,
Nor land, nor loch, nor sky
Did any comfort try,
But the wave spread
Echo's faint tone
Alone,
All down the desolate shore,
'No more—no more.'

IN THE NURSERY.

'WHERE do you go, Bob, when you're fast asleep?'
'Where? O well, once I went into a deep
Mine father told of, and a cross man said
He'd make me help to dig, and eat black bread.
I saw the Queen once, in her room, quite near.
She said, "You rude boy, Bob, how came you here?"'

'Was it like mother's boudoir?'
'Grander far,
Gold chairs and things—all over diamonds—Ah!'

'You're sure it was the Queen?'
'Of course, a crown
Was on her, and a spangly purple gown.'

'I went to heaven last night.'
'O Lily, no,
How could you?'

'Yes I did, they told me so,
And my best doll, my favourite, with the blue
Frock, Jasmine, I took her to heaven too.'

'What was it like?'
'A kind of—I can't tell—
A sort of orchard place in a long dell,

With trees all over flowers. And there were birds
Who could do talking, say soft pretty words;
They let me stroke them, and I showed it all
To Jasmine. And I heard a blue dove call,
"Child, this is heaven." I was not frightened when
It spoke; I said, "Where are the angels then?"'

'Well?'
'So it said, "Look up and you shall see."
There were two angels sitting in the tree,
As tall as mother; they had long gold hair.
They let drop down the fruit they gather'd there,
And little angels came for it—so sweet.
Here they were beggar children in the street,
And the dove said they had the prettiest things,
And wore their best frocks every day.'
'And wings,
Had they no wings?'
'O yes, and lined with white
Like swallow wings, so soft—so very light,
Fluttering about.'

'Well?'
'Well, I did not stay.
So that was all.'
'They made you go away?'

'I did not go—but—I was gone.'

'I know.'

'But it's a pity, Bob, we never go
Together.'

'Yes, and have no dreams to tell,
But the next day both know it all quite well.'

'And, Bob, if I could dream you came with me
You would be there perhaps.'
'Perhaps—we'll see.'

ECHO AND THE FERRY.

AY, Oliver! I was but seven, and he was eleven;
He looked at me pouting and rosy. I blushed where I stood.
They had told us to play in the orchard (and I only seven!
A small guest at the farm); but he said, 'Oh, a girl was no good!'
So he whistled and went, he went over the stile to the wood.
It was sad, it was sorrowful! Only a girl—only seven!
At home in the dark London smoke I had not found it out.
The pear-trees looked on in their white, and blue birds flash'd about,
And they too were angry as Oliver. Were they eleven?
I thought so. Yes, every one else was eleven—eleven!

So Oliver went, but the cowslips were tall at my feet,
And all the white orchard with fast-falling blossom was litter'd;
And under and over the branches those little birds twitter'd,

While hanging head downwards they scolded because I
was seven.
A pity. A very great pity. One should be eleven.
But soon I was happy, the smell of the world was so
sweet,
And I saw a round hole in an apple-tree rosy and old.
Then I knew! for I peeped, and I felt it was right they
should scold!
Eggs small and eggs many. For gladness I broke into
laughter;
And then some one else—oh, how softly!—came after,
came after
With laughter—with laughter came after.

And no one was near us to utter that sweet mocking
call,
That soon very tired sank low with a mystical fall.
But this was the country—perhaps it was close under
heaven;
Oh, nothing so likely; the voice might have come from
it even.
I knew about heaven. But this was the country, of this
Light, blossom, and piping, and flashing of wings not at
all.
Not at all. No. But one little bird was an easy for-
giver:
She peeped, she drew near as I moved from her domicile
small,
Then flashed down her hole like a dart—like a dart from
the quiver.
And I waded atween the long grasses and felt it was
bliss.

—So this was the country; clear dazzle of azure and
shiver
And whisper of leaves, and a humming all over the tall
White branches, a humming of bees. And I came to
the wall—
A little low wall—and looked over, and there was the
river,
The lane that led on to the village, and then the sweet
river
Clear shining and slow, she had far far to go from her
snow;
But each rush gleamed a sword in the sunlight to guard
her long flow,
And she murmur'd, methought, with a speech very soft
—very low.
'The ways will be long, but the days will be long,' quoth
the river,
''To me a long liver, long, long!' quoth the river—the
river.

I dreamed of the country that night, of the orchard, the
sky,
The voice that had mocked coming after and over and
under.
But at last—in a day or two namely—Eleven and I
Were very fast friends, and to him I confided the
wonder.
He said that was Echo. 'Was Echo a wise kind of
bee
That had learned how to laugh: could it laugh in one's
ear and then fly
And laugh again yonder?' 'No; Echo'—he whispered
it low—

'Was a woman, they said, but a woman whom no one could see
And no one could find; and he did not believe it, not he,
But he could not get near for the river that held us asunder.
Yet I that had money—a shilling, a whole silver shilling—
We might cross if I thought I would spend it.' 'Oh yes, I was willing'—
And we ran hand in hand, we ran down to the ferry, the ferry,
And we heard how she mocked at the folk with a voice clear and merry
When they called for the ferry; but oh! she was very—was very
Swift-footed. She spoke and was gone; and when Oliver cried,
'Hie over! hie over! you man of the ferry—the ferry!'
By the still water's side she was heard far and wide—she replied
And she mocked in her voice sweet and merry, 'You man of the ferry,
You man of—you man of the ferry!'

'Hie over!' he shouted. The ferryman came at his calling,
Across the clear reed-bordered river he ferried us fast;—
Such a chase! Hand in hand, foot to foot, we ran on: it surpass'd

All measure her doubling—so close, then so far away
falling,
Then gone, and no more. Oh! to see her but once
unaware,
And the mouth that had mocked, but we might not (yet
sure she was there!),
Nor behold her wild eyes and her mystical countenance
fair.

We sought in the wood, and we found the wood-wren in
her stead;
In the field, and we found but the cuckoo that talked
overhead;
By the brook, and we found the reed-sparrow deep-nested,
in brown—
Not Echo, fair Echo! for Echo, sweet Echo! was flown.

So we came to the place where the dead people wait till
God call.
The church was among them, grey moss over roof, over
wall.
Very silent, so low. And we stood on a green grassy
mound
And looked in at a window, for Echo, perhaps, in her
round
Might have come in to hide there. But no; every oak-
carven seat
Was empty. We saw the great Bible—old, old, very old,
And the parson's great Prayer-book beside it; we heard
the slow beat
Of the pendulum swing in the tower; we saw the clear
gold

Of a sunbeam float down to the aisle and then waver and
play
On the low chancel step and the railing, and Oliver
said,
'Look, Katie! look, Katie! when Lettice came here to
be wed
She stood where that sunbeam drops down, and all white
was her gown;
And she stepped upon flowers they strew'd for her.' Then
quoth small Seven:
'Shall I wear a white gown and have flowers to walk upon
ever?'

All doubtful: 'It takes a long time to grow up,' quoth
Eleven;
'You're so little, you know, and the church is so old, it
can never
Last on till you're tall.' And in whispers—because it
was old
And holy, and fraught with strange meaning, half felt,
but not told,
Full of old parsons' prayers, who were dead, of old days,
of old folk,
Neither heard nor beheld, but about us, in whispers we
spoke.
Then we went from it softly and ran hand in hand to the
strand,
While bleating of flocks and birds piping made sweeter
the land.
And Echo came back e'en as Oliver drew to the ferry,
'O Katie!' 'O Katie!' 'Come on, then!' 'Come
on, then!' 'For, see,

The round sun, all ıed, lying low by the tree'—'by the
tree.'
'By the tree.' Ay, she mocked him again, with her voice
sweet and merry:
'Hie over!' 'Hie over!' 'You man of the ferry'—
'the ferry.'
'You man of the ferry—
You man of—you man of—the ferry.'

Ay, here—it was here that we woke her, the Echo of
old;
All life of that day seems an echo, and many times told.
Shall I cross by the ferry to-morrow, and come in my
white
To that little low church? and will Oliver meet me anon?
Will it all seem an echo from childhood pass'd over—
pass'd on?
Will the grave parson bless us? Hark, hark! in the dim
failing light
I hear her! As then the child's voice clear and high,
sweet and merry
Now she mocks the man's tone with 'Hie over! Hie
over the ferry!'
'And Katie.' 'And Katie.' 'Art out with the glow-
worms to-night,
My Katie?' 'My Katie!' For gladness I break into
laughter
And tears. Then it all comes again as from far-away
years;
Again, some one else—oh, how softly!—with laughter
comes after,
Comes after—with laughter comes after.

SAILING BEYOND SEAS.

(*Old Style.*)

METHOUGHT the stars were blinking bright,
  And the old brig's sails unfurled;
I said, 'I will sail to my love this night
  At the other side of the world.'
I stepped aboard—we sailed so fast—
  The sun shot up from the bourne;
But a dove that perched upon the mast
  Did mourn, and mourn, and mourn.
    'O fair dove! O fond dove!
      And dove with the white breast,
    Let me alone, the dream is my own,
      And my heart is full of rest.

'My true love fares on this great hill,
  Feeding his sheep for aye;'
I looked in his hut, but all was still,
  My love was gone away.
I went to gaze in the forest creek,
  And the dove mourned on apace;
No flame did flash, nor fair blue reek
  Rose up to show me his place.
    'O last love! O first love!
      My love with the true heart,
    To think I have come to this your home,
      And yet—we are apart!'

My love! He stood at my right hand,
  His eyes were grave and sweet.
Methought he said, 'In this far land,
  O, is it thus we meet!
Ah, maid most dear, I am not here;
  I have no place—no part—
No dwelling more by sea or shore,
  But only in thy heart.'
    O fair dove! O fond dove!
      Till night rose over the bourne,
    The dove on the mast, as we sailed fast,
      Did mourn, and mourn, and mourn.

AN OLD WIFE'S SONG.

AND what will ye hear, my daughters dear?—
  O, what will ye hear this night?
Shall I sing you a song of the yuletide cheer,
  Or of lovers and ladies bright?

'Thou shalt sing,' they say (for we dwell far away
  From the land where fain would we be),
'Thou shalt sing us again some old-world strain
  That is sung in our own countrie.

'Thou shalt mind us so of the times long ago,
  When we walked on the upland lea,
While the old harbour light waxed faint in the white,
  Long rays shooting out from the sea;

'While lambs were yet asleep, and the dew lay deep
  On the grass, and their fleeces clean and fair.
Never grass was seen so thick nor so green
  As the grass that grew up there!

'In the town was no smoke, for none there awoke—
  At our feet it lay still as still could be;
And we saw far below the long river flow,
  And the schooners a-warping out to sea.

'Sing us now a strain shall make us feel again
  As we felt in that sacred peace of morn,
When we had the first view of the wet sparkling dew,
  In the shyness of a day just born.'

So I sang an old song—it was plain and not long—
  I had sung it very oft when they were small;
And long ere it was done they wept every one:
  Yet this was all the song—this was all:—

The snow lies white, and the moon gives light,
  I'll out to the freezing mere,
And ease my heart with one little song,
  For none will be nigh to hear.
  And it's O my love, my love!
  And it's O my dear, my dear!
It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
  When nobody's nigh to hear.

My love is young, she is young, is young;
  When she laughs the dimple dips.
We walked in the wind, and her long locks blew
  Till sweetly they touched my lips.

And I'll out to the freezing mere,
Where the stiff reeds whistle so low,
And I'll tell my mind to the friendly wind,
Because I have loved her so.

Ay, and she's true, my lady is true!
And that's the best of it all;
And when she blushes my heart so yearns
That tears are ready to fall.
And it's O my love, my love!
And it's O my dear, my dear!
It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
When nobody's nigh to hear.

SONGS ON THE VOICES OF BIRDS.

INTRODUCTION.

CHILD AND BOATMAN.

'MARTIN, I wonder who makes all the songs.'
'You do, sir?'
'Yes, I wonder how they come.'
'Well, boy, I wonder what you'll wonder next!'
'But somebody must make them?'
'Sure enough.'
'Does your wife know?'
'She never said she did.'
'You told me that she knew so many things.'
'I said she was a London woman, sir,
And a fine scholar, but I never said
She knew about the songs.'
'I wish she did.'
'And I wish no such thing; she knows enough,
She knows too much already. Look you now,
This vessel's off the stocks, a tidy craft.'
'A schooner, Martin?'
'No, boy, no; a brig,
Only she's schooner-rigged—a lovely craft.'
'Is she for me? O, thank you, Martin dear.
What shall I call her?'

'Well, sir, what you please.'
'Then write on her "The Eagle."'
'Bless the child!
Eagle! why, you know nought of eagles, you.
When we lay off the coast, up Canada way,
And chanced to be ashore when twilight fell,
That was the place for eagles; bald they were,
With eyes as yellow as gold.'
'O, Martin dear,
Tell me about them.'
'Tell! there's nought to tell,
Only they snored o' nights and frighted us.'
'Snored?'
'Ay, I tell you, snored; they slept upright
In the great oaks by scores; as true as time,
If I'd had aught upon my mind just then,
I wouldn't have walked that wood for unknown gold;
It was most awful. When the moon was full,
I've seen them fish at night, in the middle watch,
When she got low. I've seen them plunge like stones,
And come up fighting with a fish as long,
Ay, longer than my arm; and they would sail—
When they had struck its life out—they would sail—
Over the deck, and show their fell, fierce eyes,
And croon for pleasure, hug the prey, and speed
Grand as a frigate on a wind.'
'My ship,
She must be called "The Eagle" after these.
Martin, you'll ask your wife about the songs
When you go in at dinner-time?'
'Not I.'

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE UNSATISFIED HEART.

When in a May-day hush
Chanteth the Missel-thrush,
The harp o' the heart makes answer with murmurous stirs;
When Robin-redbreast sings,
We think on budding springs,
And Culvers when they coo are love's remembrancers.

But thou in the trance of light
Stayest the feeding night,
And Echo makes sweet her lips with the utterance wise,
And casts at our glad feet,
In a wisp of fancies fleet,
Life's fair, life's unfulfilled, impassioned prophecies.

Her central thought full well
Thou hast the wit to tell,
To take the sense o' the dark and to yield it so;
The moral of moonlight
To set in a cadence bright,
And sing our loftiest dream that we thought none did know.

I have no nest as thou,
Bird on the blossoming bough,
Yet over thy tongue outfloweth the song o' my soul,

Chanting, ' Forego thy strife,
The spirit out-acts the life,
But much is seldom theirs who can perceive the whole.

' Thou drawest a perfect lot
All thine, but holden not,
Lie low, at the feet of beauty that ever shall bide;
There might be sorer smart
Than thine, far-seeing heart,
Whose fate is still to yearn, and not be satisfied.'

SAND MARTINS.

I PASSED an inland-cliff precipitate:
From tiny caves peeped many a soot-black poll;
In each a mother-martin sat elate,
And of the news delivered her small soul.

Fantastic chatter! hasty, glad, and gay,
Whereof the meaning was not ill to tell:
'Gossip, how wags the world with you to-day?'
'Gossip, the world wags well, the world wags well.'

And heark'ning, I was sure their little ones
Were in the bird-talk, and discourse was made
Concerning hot sea-bights and tropic suns,
For a clear sultriness the tune conveyed;—

And visions of the sky as of a cup
Hailing down light on pagan Pharaoh's sand,
And quivering air-waves trembling up and up,
And blank stone faces marvellously bland.

'When should the young be fledged and with them
hie
Where costly day drops down in crimson light?
(Fortunate countries of the fire-fly
Swarm with blue diamonds all the sultry night,

'And the immortal moon takes turn with them.)
When should they pass again by that red land,
Where lovely mirage works a broidered hem
To fringe with phantom-palms a robe of sand?

'When should they dip their breasts again and play
In slumberous azure pools clear as the air,
Where rosy-winged flamingos fish all day,
Stalking amid the lotus blossom fair?

'Then, over podded tamarinds bear their flight,
While cassias blossom in the zone of calms,
And so betake them to a south sea-bight,
To gossip in the crowns of cocoa-palms

'Whose roots are in the spray. O, haply there
Some dawn, white-wingèd they might chance to find
A frigate standing in to make more fair
The loneliness unaltered of mankind.

'A frigate come to water: nuts would fall,
And nimble feet would climb the flower-flushed strand,
While northern talk would ring, and therewithal
The martins would desire the cool north land.

'And all would be as it had been before;
  Again at eve there would be news to tell;
Who passed should hear them chant it o'er and o'er,
  "Gossip, how wags the world?" "Well, gossip well."'

A POET IN HIS YOUTH, AND THE CUCKOO-BIRD.

ONCE upon a time, I lay
Fast asleep at dawn of day;
Windows open to the south,
Fancy pouting her sweet mouth
To my ear.
                    She turned a globe
In her slender hand, her robe
Was all spangled; and she said,
As she sat at my bed's head,
'Poet, poet, what, asleep!
Look! the ray runs up the steep
To your roof.' Then in the golden
Essence of romances olden,
Bathed she my entrancèd heart.
And she gave a hand to me,
Drew me onward, 'Come!' said she;
And she moved with me apart,
Down the lovely vale of Leisure.

Such its name was, I heard say,
For some Fairies trooped that way;
Common people of the place,
Taking their accustomed pleasure
(All the clocks being stopped), to race

Down the slope on palfreys fleet.
Bridle bells made tinkling sweet;
And they said, 'What signified
Faring home till eventide:
There were pies on every shelf,
And the bread would bake itself.'
But for that I cared not, fed,
As it were, with angels' bread,
Sweet as honey; yet next day
All foredoomed to melt away;
Gone before the sun waxed hot,
Melted manna that *was not.*

Rock-doves' poetry of plaint,
Or the starling's courtship quaint,
Heart made much of; 'twas a boon
Won from silence, and too soon
Wasted in the ample air:
Building rooks far distant were.
Scarce at all would speak the rills,
And I saw the idle hills,
In their amber hazes deep,
Fold themselves and go to sleep,
Though it was not yet high noon.

Silence? Rather music brought
From the spheres! As if a thought,
Having taken wings, did fly
Through the reaches of the sky.
Silence? No, a sumptuous sigh
That had found embodiment,
That had come across the deep
After months of wintry sleep,

And with tender heavings went
Floating up the firmament.

'O,' I mourned, half slumbering yet,
''Tis the voice of *my* regret—
Mine!' and I awoke. Full sweet
Saffron sunbeams did me greet;
And the voice it spake again,
Dropped from yon blue cup of light
Or some cloudlet swan's-down white
On my soul, that drank full fain
The sharp joy—the sweet pain—
Of its clear, right innocent,
Unreprovèd discontent.

How it came—where it went—
Who can tell? The open blue
Quivered with it, and I, too,
Trembled. I remembered me
Of the springs that used to be,
When a dimpled white-haired child,
Shy and tender and half wild,
In the meadows I had heard
Some way off the talking bird,
And had felt it marvellous sweet,
For it laughed: it did me greet,
Calling me: yet, hid away
In the woods, it would not play.
No.
        And all the world about,
While a man will work or sing,
Or a child pluck flowers of spring,
Thou wilt scatter music out,

Rouse him with thy wandering note,
Changeful fancies set afloat,
Almost tell with thy clear throat,
But not quite—the wonder-rife
Most sweet riddle, dark and dim,
That he searcheth all his life,
Searcheth yet, and ne'er expoundeth;
And so winnowing of thy wings,
Touch and trouble his heart's strings,
That a certain music soundeth
In that wondrous instrument,
With a trembling upward sent,
That is reckoned sweet above
By the Greatness surnamed Love.

'O, I hear thee in the blue;
Would that I might wing it too!
O to have what hope hath seen!
O to be what might have been!

'O to set my life, sweet bird,
To a tune that oft I heard
When I used to stand alone
Listening to the lovely moan
Of the swaying pines o'erhead,
While, a-gathering of bee-bread
For their living, murmured round,
As the pollen dropped to ground,
All the nations from the hives;
And the little brooding wives
On each nest, brown dusky things,
Sat with gold-dust on their wings.

Then beyond (more sweet than all)
Talked the tumbling waterfall;
And there were, and there were not
(As might fall, and form anew
Bell-hung drops of honey-dew)
Echoes of—I know not what;
As if some right-joyous elf,
While about his own affairs,
Whistled softly otherwheres;
Nay, as if our mother dear,
Wrapped in sun-warm atmosphere,
Laughed a little to herself,
Laughed a little as she rolled,
Thinking on the days of old.

'Ah! there be some hearts, I wis,
To which nothing comes amiss.
Mine was one. Much secret wealth
I was heir to: and by stealth,
When the moon was fully grown,
And she thought herself alone,
I have heard her, ay, right well,
Shoot a silver message down
To the unseen sentinel
Of a still, snow-thatchèd town.

'Once, a while ago, I peered
In the nest where Spring was reared.
There, she, quivering her fair wings,
Flattered March with chirrupings;
And they fed her; nights and days
Fed her mouth with much sweet food,
And her heart with love and praise,

Till the wild thing rose and flew
Over woods and water-springs,
Shaking off the morning dew
In a rainbow from her wings.

'Once (I will to you confide
More), O once in forest wide,
I, benighted, overheard
Marvellous mild echoes stirred,
And a calling half defined,
And an answering from afar;
Somewhat talkèd with a star,
And the talk was of mankind.

'"Cuckoo, cuckoo!"
Float anear in upper blue:
Art thou yet a prophet true?
Wilt thou say, "And having seen
Things that be, and have not been,
Thou art free o' the world, for nought
Can despoil thee of thy thought"?
Nay, but make me music yet,
Bird, as deep as my regret,
For a certain hope hath set,
Like a star; and left me heir
To a crying for its light,
An aspiring infinite,
And a beautiful despair!

'Ah! no more, no more, no more
I shall lie at thy shut door,
Mine ideal, my desired,
Dreaming thou wilt open it,
And step out, thou most admired,
By my side to fare, or sit,

Quenching hunger and all drouth
With the wit of thy fair mouth,
Showing me the wishèd prize
In the calm of thy dove's eyes,
Teaching me the wonder-rife
Majesties of human life,
All its fairest possible sum,
And the grace of its to come.

'What a difference! Why of late
All sweet music used to say,
"She will come, and with thee stay
To-morrow, man, if not to-day."
Now it murmurs, "Wait, wait, wait!"'

A RAVEN IN A WHITE CHINE.

I SAW when I looked up, on either hand,
  A pale high chalk-cliff, reared aloft in white;
A narrowing rent soon closed toward the land—
  Toward the sea, an open yawning bight.

The polished tide, with scarce a hint of blue,
  Washed in the bight; above with angry moan
A raven, that was robbed, sat up in view,
  Croaking and crying on a ledge alone.

'Stand on thy nest, spread out thy fateful wings,
  With sullen hungry love bemoan thy brood,
For boys have wrung their necks, those imp-like things,
  Whose beaks dripped crimson daily at their food.

'Cry, thou black prophetess! cry, and despair,
None love thee, none! Their father was thy foe,
Whose father in his youth did know thy lair,
And steal thy little demons long ago.

'Thou madest many childless for their sake,
And picked out many eyes that loved the light.
Cry, thou black prophetess! sit up, awake,
Forebode; and ban them through the desolate night.'

Lo! while I spake it, with a crimson hue
The dipping sun endowed that silver flood,
And all the cliffs flushed red, and up she flew,
The bird, as mad to bathe in airy blood.

'Nay, thou may'st cry, the omen is not thine,
Thou aged priestess of fell doom, and fate!
It is not blood: thy gods are making wine,
They spilt the must outside their city gate,

'And stained their azure pavement with the lees:
They will not listen though thou cry aloud.
Old Chance, thy dame, sits mumbling at her ease,
Nor hears; the fair hag, Luck, is in her shroud.

'They heed not, they withdraw the sky-hung sign:
Thou hast no charm against the favourite race;
Thy gods pour out for it, not blood, but wine;
There is no justice in their dwelling-place!

'Safe in their father's house the boys shall rest,
Though thy fell brood doth stark and silent lie;
Their unborn sons may yet despoil thy nest:
Cry, thou black prophetess! lift up! cry, cry.'

THE WARBLING OF BLACKBIRDS.

WHEN I hear the waters fretting,
When I see the chestnut letting
All her lovely blossom falter down, I think, 'Alas the day!'
Once with magical sweet singing,
Blackbirds set the woodland ringing,
That awakes no more while April hours wear themselves away.

In our hearts fair hope lay smiling,
Sweet as air, and all beguiling;
And there hung a mist of bluebells on the slope and down the dell;
And we talked of joy and splendour
That the years unborn would render,
And the blackbirds helped us with the story, for they knew it well.

Piping, fluting, 'Bees are humming,
April's here, and summer's coming;
Don't forget us when you walk, a man with men, in pride and joy;
Think on us in alleys shady,
When you step a graceful lady;
For no fairer day have we to hope for, little girl and boy.

'Laugh and play, O lisping waters,
Lull our downy sons and daughters;
Come, O wind, and rock their leafy cradle in thy wanderings coy;

When they wake we'll end the measure
With a wild sweet cry of pleasure,
And a "Hey down derry, let's be merry! little girl and boy!"'

SEA-MEWS IN WINTER-TIME.

I WALKED beside a dark grey sea,
And said, 'O world, how cold thou art!
Thou poor white world, I pity thee,
For joy and warmth from thee depart.

'Yon rising wave licks off the snow,
Winds on the crag each other chase,
In little powdery whirls they blow
The misty fragments down its face.

'The sea is cold, and dark its rim,
Winter sits cowering on the wold,
And I, beside this watery brim,
Am also lonely, also cold.'

I spoke, and drew toward a rock,
Where many mews made twittering sweet;
Their wings upreared, the clustering flock
Did pat the sea-grass with their feet.

A rock but half submerged, the sea
Ran up and washed it while they fed;
Their fond and foolish ecstasy
A wondering in my fancy bred.

Joy companied with every cry,
Joy in their food, in that keen wind,
That heaving sea, that shaded sky,
And in themselves, and in their kind.

The phantoms of the deep at play!
What idless graced the twittering things;
Luxurious paddlings in the spray,
And delicate lifting up of wings.

Then all at once a flight, and fast
The lovely crowd flew out to sea;
If mine own life had been recast,
Earth had not looked more changed to me.

'Where is the cold? Yon clouded skies
Have only dropt their curtains low
To shade the old mother where she lies
Sleeping a little, 'neath the snow.

'The cold is not in crag, nor scar,
Not in the snows that lap the lea,
Not in yon wings that beat afar,
Delighting, on the crested sea;

'No, nor in yon exultant wind
That shakes the oak and bends the pine.
Look near, look in, and thou shalt find
No sense of cold, fond fool, but thine!'

With that I felt the gloom depart,
And thoughts within me did unfold,
Whose sunshine warmed me to the heart—
I walked in joy, and was not cold.

THE SERMON,

FROM "BROTHERS AND A SERMON."

*　*　*　*　*　*

THEN went the sun into the west, and down
Upon the water stooped an orange cloud,
And the pale milky reaches flushed, as glad
To wear its colours; and the sultry air
Went out to sea, and puffed the sails of ships
With thymy wafts, the breath of trodden grass:
It took moreover music, for across
The heather belt and over pasture land
Came the sweet monotone of one slow bell,
And parted time into divisions rare,
Whereof each morsel brought its own delight.

'They ring for service,' quoth the fisherman;
'Our parson preaches in the church to-night.'

'And do the people go?' my brother asked.

'Ay, sir; they count it mean to stay away,
He takes it so to heart. He's a rare man,
Our parson; half a head above us all.'

'That's a great gift, and notable,' said I.

'Ay, sir; and when he was a younger man
He went out in the lifeboat very oft,

Before the "Grace of Sunderland" was wrecked.
He's never been his own man since that hour;
For there were thirty men aboard of her,
Anigh as close as you are now to me,
And ne'er a one was saved.
They're lying now,
With two small children, in a row: the church
And yard are full of seamen's graves, and few
Have any names.
She bumped upon the reef;
Our parson, my young son, and several more
Were lashed together with a two-inch rope,
And crept along to her; their mates ashore
Ready to haul them in. The gale was high,
The sea was all a boiling seething froth,
And God Almighty's guns were going off,
And the land trembled.

When she took the ground,
She went to pieces like a lock of hay
Tossed from a pitchfork. Ere it came to that,
The captain reeled on deck with two small things,
One in each arm—his little lad and lass.
Their hair was long, and blew before his face,
Or else we thought he had been saved; he fell,
But held them fast. The crew, poor luckless souls!
The breakers licked them off; and some were crushed,
Some swallowed in the yeast, some flung up dead,
The dear breath beaten out of them: not one
Jumped from the wreck upon the reef to catch
The hands that strained to reach, but tumbled back
With eyes wide open. But the captain lay
And clung—the only man alive. They prayed—

"For God's sake, captain, throw the children here!"
"Throw them!" our parson cried; and then she struck:
And he threw one, a pretty two-years' child;
But the gale dashed him on the slippery verge,
And down he went. They say they heard him cry.

'Then he rose up and took the other one,
And all our men reached out their hungry arms,
And cried out, "Throw her, throw her!" and he did.
He threw her right against the parson's breast,
And all at once a sea broke over them,
And they that saw it from the shore have said
It struck the wreck and piecemeal scattered it,
Just as a woman might the lump of salt
That 'twixt her hands into the kneading-pan
She breaks and crumbles on her rising bread.

'We hauled our men in: two of them were dead—
The sea had beaten them, their heads hung down;
Our parson's arms were empty, for the wave
Had torn away the pretty, pretty lamb;
We often see him stand beside her grave:
But 'twas no fault of his, no fault of his.

'I ask your pardon, sirs; I prate and prate,
And never have I said what brought me here.
Sirs, if you want a boat to-morrow morn,
I'm bold to say there's ne'er a boat like mine.'

'Ay, that was what we wanted,' we replied;
'A boat, his boat;' and off he went, well pleased.

We, too, rose up (the crimson in the sky
Flushing our faces), and went sauntering on,
And thought to reach our lodging, by the cliff.

And up and down among the heather beds,
And up and down between the sheaves, we sped,
Doubling and winding; for a long ravine
Ran up into the land and cut us off,
Pushing out slippery ledges for the birds,
And rent with many a crevice, where the wind
Had laid up drifts of empty eggshells, swept
From the bare berths of gulls and guillemots.

So, as it chanced, we lighted on a path
That led into a nutwood; and our talk
Was louder than beseemed, if we had known,
With argument and laughter; for the path,
As we sped onward, took a sudden turn
Abrupt, and we came out on churchyard grass,
And close upon a porch, and face to face
With those within, and with the thirty graves.
We heard the voice of one who preached within,
And stopped. 'Come on,' my brother whispered me,
'It were more decent that we enter now;
Come on! we'll hear this rare old demigod:
I like strong men and large; I like grey heads,
And grand gruff voices, hoarse though this may be
With shouting in the storm.'

It was not hoarse,
The voice that preached to those few fishermen
And women, nursing mothers with the babes
Hushed on their breasts; and yet it held them not:
Their drowsy eyes were drawn to look at us,
Till, having leaned our rods against the wall,
And left the dogs at watch, we entered, sat,
And were apprised that, though he saw us not,

The parson knew that he had lost the eyes
And ears of those before him, for he made
A pause—a long dead pause—and dropped his arms,
And stood awaiting, till I felt the red
Mount to my brow.

And a soft fluttering stir
Passed over all, and every mother hushed
The babe beneath her shawl, and he turned round
And met our eyes, unused to diffidence,
But diffident of his; then with a sigh
Fronted the folk, lifted his grand grey head,
And said, as one that pondered now the words
He had been preaching on with new surprise,
And found fresh marvel in their sound, '"Behold!
Behold!" saith He, "I stand at the door and knock.'"
Then said the parson: 'What! and shall He wait,
And must He wait, not only till we say,
"Good Lord, the house is clean, the hearth is swept,
The children sleep, the mackerel-boats are in,
And all the nets are mended; therefore I
Will slowly to the door and open it:"
But must He also wait where still, behold!
He stands and knocks, while we do say, "Good Lord,
The gentlefolk are come to worship here,
And I will up and open to Thee soon;
But first I pray a little longer wait,
For I am taken up with them; my eyes
Must needs regard the fashion of their clothes,
And count the gains I think to make by them;
Forsooth, they are of much account, good Lord!
Therefore have patience with me—wait, dear Lord!
Or come again?"

What! must He wait for THIS—
For this? Ay, He doth wait for this, and still,
Waiting for this, He, patient, raileth not;
Waiting for this, e'en this He saith, "Behold!
I stand at the door and knock."
O patient hand!
Knocking and waiting—knocking in the night
When work is done! I charge you, by the sea
Whereby you fill your children's mouths, and by
The might of Him that made it—fishermen!
I charge you, mothers! by the mother's milk
He drew, and by His Father, God over all,
Blessèd for ever, that ye answer Him!
Open the door with shame, if ye have sinned;
If ye be sorry, open it with sighs.
Albeit the place be bare for poverty,
And comfortless for lack of plenishing,
Be not abashed for that, but open it,
And take Him in that comes to sup with thee;
"Behold!" He saith, "I stand at the door and knock."

Now, hear me: there be troubles in this world
That no man can escape, and there is one
That lieth hard and heavy on my soul,
Concerning that which is to come:—
I say
As a man that knows what earthly trouble means,
I will not bear this ONE—I cannot bear
This ONE—I cannot bear the weight of you—
You—every one of you, body and soul;
You, with the care you suffer, and the loss

That you sustain; you, with the growing up
To peril, maybe with the growing old
To want, unless before I stand with you
At the great white throne, I may be free of all,
And uttter to the full what shall discharge
Mine obligation: nay, I will not wait
A day, for every time the black clouds rise,
And the gale freshens, still I search my soul
To find if there be aught that can persuade
To good, or ought forsooth that can beguile
From evil, that I (miserable man!
If that be so) have left unsaid, undone.

'So that when any risen from sunken wrecks,
Or rolled in by the billows to the edge
Of the everlasting strand, what time the sea
Gives up her dead, shall meet me, they may say
Never, "Old man, you told us not of this;
You left us fisher-lads that had to toil
Ever in danger of the secret stab
Of rocks, far deadlier than the dagger; winds
Of breath more murderous than the cannon's; waves
Mighty to rock us to our death; and gulfs
Ready beneath to suck and swallow us in:
This crime be on your head; and as for us—
What shall we do?" but rather—nay, not so,
I will not think it; I will leave the dead,
Appealing but to life: I am afraid
Of you, but not so much if you have sinned
As for the doubt if sin shall be forgiven.
The day was, I have been afraid of pride—
Hard man's hard pride; but now I am afraid

Of man's humility. I counsel you,
By the great God's great humbleness, and by
His pity, be not humble over-much.
See! I will show at whose unopened doors
He stands and knocks, that you may never say,
" I am too mean, too ignorant, too lost;
He knocks at other doors, but not at mine."

'See here! it is the night! it is the night!
And snow lies thickly, white untrodden snow,
And the wan moon upon a casement shines—
A casement crusted o'er with frosty leaves,
That make her ray less bright along the floor.
A woman sits, with hands upon her knees,
Poor tired soul! and she has nought to do,
For there is neither fire nor candle-light:
The driftwood ash lies cold upon her hearth;
The rushlight flickered down an hour ago;
Her children wail a little in their sleep
For cold and hunger, and, as if that sound
Was not enough, another comes to her,
Over God's undefilèd snow—a song—
Nay, never hang your heads—I say, a song.

'And doth she curse the alehouse, and the sots
That drink the night out and their earnings there,
And drink their manly strength and courage down,
And drink away the little children's bread,
And starve her, starving by the self-same act
Her tender suckling, that with piteous eyes
Looks in her face, till scarcely she has heart
To work, and earn the scanty bit and drop
That feed the others?

Does she curse the song?
I think not, fishermen; I have not heard
Such women curse. God's curse is curse enough.
To-morrow she will say a bitter thing,
Pulling her sleeve down lest the bruises show—
A bitter thing, but meant for an excuse—
" My master is not worse than many men:"
But now, ay, now she sitteth dumb and still;
No food, no comfort, cold and poverty
Bearing her down.
My heart is sore for her;
How long, how long? When troubles come of God,
When men are frozen out of work, when wives
Are sick, when working fathers fail and die,
When boats go down at sea—then nought behoves
Like patience; but for troubles wrought of men
Patience is hard—I tell you it is hard.

'O thou poor soul! it is the night—the night;
Against thy door drifts up the silent snow,
Blocking thy threshold: "Fall," thou sayest, "fall, fall,
Cold snow, and lie and be trod underfoot.
Am not I fallen? Wake up, and pipe, O wind,
Dull wind, and beat and bluster at my door:
Merciful wind, sing me a hoarse rough song,
For there is other music made to-night
That I would fain not hear. Wake, thou still sea,
Heavily plunge. Shoot on, white waterfall.
O, I could long like thy cold icicles
Freeze, freeze, and hang upon the frosty cliff
And not complain, so I might melt at last
In the warm summer sun, as thou wilt do!

'"But woe is me! I think there is no sun;
My sun is sunken, and the night grows dark:
None care for me. The children cry for bread,
And I have none, and nought can comfort me;
Even if the heavens were free to such as I,
It were not much, for death is long to wait,
And heaven is far to go!"

'And speak'st thou thus,
Despairing of the sun that sets to thee,
And of the earthly love that wanes to thee,
And of the heaven that lieth far from thee?
Peace, peace, fond fool! One draweth near thy door
Whose footsteps leave no print across the snow;
The sun has risen with comfort in his face,
The smile of heaven, to warm thy frozen heart
And bless with saintly hand. What! is it long
To wait and far to go? Thou shalt not go;
Behold, across the snow to thee He comes,
Thy heaven descends;—and is it long to wait?
Thou shalt not wait: "This night, this night," He
saith,
'I stand at the door and knock."

'It is enough—can such an one be here—
Yea, here? O God forgive you, fishermen!
One! is there only one? But do thou know,
O woman pale for want, if thou art here,
That on thy lot much thought is spent in heaven;
And, coveting the heart a hard man broke,
One standeth patient, watching in the night,
And waiting in the day-time.

What shall be
If thou wilt answer? He will smile on thee:
One smile of His shall be enough to heal
The wound of man's neglect; and He will sigh,
Pitying the trouble which that sigh shall cure;
And He will speak—speak in the desolate night,
In the dark night: "For me a thorny crown
Men wove, and nails were driven in my hands
And feet: there was an earthquake, and I died;
I died, and am alive for evermore.

'"I died for thee! for thee I am alive,
And my humanity doth mourn for thee,
For thou art mine; and all thy little ones,
They, too, are mine, are mine. Behold, the house
Is dark, but there is brightness where the sons
Of God are singing, and, behold, the heart
Is troubled: yet the nations walk in white;
They have forgotten how to weep; and thou
Shalt also come, and I will foster thee
And satisfy thy soul; and thou shalt warm
Thy trembling life beneath the smile of God.
A little while—it is a little while—
A little while, and I will comfort thee;
I go away, but I will come again."

'But hear me yet. There was a poor old man
Who sat and listened to the raging sea,
And heard it thunder, lunging at the cliffs
As like to tear them down. He lay at night;
And "Lord have mercy on the lads," said he,
"That sailed at noon, though they be none of mine!
For when the gale gets up, and when the wind

Flings at the window, when it beats the roof,
And lulls, and stops, and rouses up again,
And cuts the crest clean off the plunging wave,
And scatters it like feathers up the field,
Why, then I think of my two lads : my lads
That would have worked and never let me want,
And never let me take the parish pay.
No, none of mine ; my lads were drowned at sea—
My two—before the most of these were born.
I know how sharp that cuts, since my poor wife
Walked up and down, and still walked up and down,
And I walked after, and one could not hear
A word the other said, for wind and sea
That raged and beat and thundered in the night—
The awfullest, the longest, lightest night
That ever parents had to spend—a moon
That shone like daylight on the breaking wave.
Ah me ! and other men have lost their lads,
And other women wiped their poor dead mouths,
And got them home and dried them in the house,
And seen the driftwood lie along the coast,
That was a tidy boat but one day back,
And seen next tide the neighbours gather it
To lay it on their fires.

'Ay, I was strong
And able-bodied—loved my work ;—but now
I am a useless hull : 'tis time I sank ;
I am in all men's way ; I trouble them ;
I am a trouble to myself : but yet
I feel for mariners of stormy nights,
And feel for wives that watch ashore. Ay, ay !

If I had learning I would pray the Lord
To bring them in: but I'm no scholar, no;
Book-learning is a world too hard for me:
But I make bold to say, O Lord, good Lord,
I am a broken-down poor man, a fool
To speak to Thee: but in the Book 'tis writ,
As I hear say from others that can read,
How, when Thou camest, Thou didst love the sea,
And live with fisherfolk, whereby 'tis sure
Thou knowest all the peril they go through,
And all their trouble.
As for me, good Lord,
I have no boat; I am too old, too old—
My lads are drowned; I buried my poor wife;
My little lasses died so long ago
That mostly I forget what they are like.
Thou knowest, Lord; they were such little ones.
I know they went to Thee, but I forget
Their faces, though I missed them sore.
O Lord,
I was a strong man; I have drawn good food
And made good money out of Thy great sea:
But yet I cried for them at nights; and now,
Although I be so old, I miss my lads,
And there be many folk this stormy night
Heavy with fear for theirs. Merciful Lord,
Comfort them; save their honest boys, their pride,
And let them hear next ebb the blessedest,
Best sound—the boat-keels grating on the sand.

'I cannot pray with finer words: I know
Nothing; I have no learning, cannot learn—

Too old, too old. They say I want for nought,
I have the parish pay; but I am dull
Of hearing, and the fire scarce warms me through.
God save me—I have been a sinful man—
And save the lives of them that still can work,
For they are good to me; ay, good to me.
But, Lord, I am a trouble! and I sit,
And I am lonesome, and the nights are few
That any think to come and draw a chair,
And sit in my poor place and talk a while.
Why should they come, forsooth? Only the wind
Knocks at my door, O long and loud it knocks,
The only thing God made that has a mind
To enter in."

Yea, thus the old man spake:
These were the last words of his aged mouth—
BUT ONE DID KNOCK. One came to sup with him,
That humble, weak old man; knocked at his door
In the rough pauses of the labouring wind.
I tell you that One knocked while it was dark,
Save where their foaming passion had made white
Those livid seething billows. What He said
In that poor place where He did talk a while,
I cannot tell: but this I am assured,
That when the neighbours came the morrow morn,
What time the wind had bated, and the sun
Shone on the old man's floor, they saw the smile
He passed away in, and they said, "He looks
As he had woke and seen the face of Christ,
And with that rapturous smile held out his arms
To come to Him!"

Can such an one be here,
So old, so weak, so ignorant, so frail?
The Lord be good to thee, thou poor old man;
It would be hard with thee if heaven were shut
To such as have not learning! Nay, nay, nay,
He condescends to them of low estate;
To such as are despised He cometh down,
Stands at the door and knocks.

Yet bear with me.
I have a message; I have more to say.
Shall sorrow win His pity, and not sin—
That burden ten times heavier to be borne?
What think you? Shall the virtuous have His care
Alone? O virtuous women, think not scorn,
For you may lift your faces everywhere;
And now that it grows dusk, and I can see
None though they front me straight, I fain would tell
A certain thing to you. I say to *you;*
And if it doth concern you, as methinks
It doth, then surely it concerneth all.
I say that there was once—I say not here—
I say that there was once a castaway,
And she was weeping, weeping bitterly;
Kneeling, and crying with a heart-sick cry
That choked itself in sobs—"O my good name!
O my good name!" And none did hear her cry!
Nay; and it lightened, and the storm-bolts fell,
And the rain splashed upon the roof, and still
She, storm-tost as the storming elements—
She cried with an exceeding bitter cry,
"O my good name!" And then the thunder-cloud

Stooped low and burst in darkness overhead,
And rolled, and rocked her on her knees, and shook
The frail foundations of her dwelling-place.
But she—if any neighbours had come in,
(None did): if any neighbours had come in
They might have seen her crying on her knees,
And sobbing "Lost, lost, lost!" beating her breast—
Her breast for ever pricked with cruel thorns,
The wounds whereof could neither balm assuage
Nor any patience heal—beating her brow,
Which ached, it had been bent so long to hide
From level eyes, whose meaning was contempt.

'O ye good women, it is hard to leave
The paths of virtue and return again.
What if this sinner wept, and none of you
Comforted her? And what if she did strive
To mend, and none of you believed her strife,
Nor looked upon her? Mark, I do not say,
Though it was hard, you therefore were to blame;
That she had aught against you, though your feet
Never drew near her door. But I beseech
Your patience. Once in old Jerusalem
A woman kneeled at consecrated feet,
Kissed them, and washed them with her tears.
What then?
I think that yet our Lord is pitiful:
I think I see the castaway e'en now!
And she is not alone: the heavy rain
Splashes without, and sullen thunder rolls,
But she is lying at the sacred feet
Of One transfigured.

And her tears flow down
Down to her lips—her lips that kiss the print
Of nails; and love is like to break her heart!
Love and repentance—for it still doth work
Sore in her soul to think, to think that she,
Even she, did pierce the sacred, sacred feet,
And bruise the thorn-crowned head.
O Lord, our Lord
How great is Thy compassion! Come, good Lord,
For we will open. Come this night, good Lord;
Stand at the door and knock.
And is this all?—
Trouble, old age and simpleness, and sin—
This all? It might be all some other night;
But this night, if a voice said, "Give account
Whom hast thou with thee?" then must I reply,
"Young manhood have I, beautiful youth and strength,
Rich with all treasure drawn up from the crypt
Where lies the learning of the ancient world—
Brave with all thoughts that poets fling upon
The strand of life, as driftweed after storms:
Doubtless familiar with Thy mountain heads,
And the dread purity of Alpine snows,
Doubtless familiar with Thy works concealed
For ages from mankind—outlying worlds,
And many moonèd spheres—and Thy great store
Of stars, more thick than mealy dust which here
Powders the pale leaves of Auriculas.

This do I know, but, Lord, I know not more.

Not more concerning them—concerning Thee,
I know Thy bounty; where Thou givest much

Standing without, if any call Thee in
Thou givest more." Speak, then, O rich and strong:
Open, O happy young, ere yet the hand
Of him that knocks, wearied at last, forbear;
The patient foot its thankless quest refrain,
The wounded heart for evermore withdraw.'

I have heard many speak, but this one man—
So anxious not to go to heaven alone—
This one man I remember, and his look,
Till twilight overshadowed him. He ceased,
And out in darkness with the fisher folk
We passed; and stumbled over mounds of moss,
And heard, but did not see, the passing beck.
Ah, graceless heart, would that it could regain
From the dim storehouse of sensations past
The impress full of tender awe, that night,
Which fell on me! It was as if the Christ
Had been drawn down from heaven to track us home,
And any of the footsteps following us
Might have been His.

SONG OF EVENING.

(*Old English Manner.*)

APPRENTICED.

'COME out and hear the waters shoot, the owlet hoot,
the owlet hoot;
Yon crescent moon, a golden boat, hangs dim behind
the tree, O!
The dropping thorn makes white the grass, O sweetest
lass, and sweetest lass;
Come out and smell the ricks of hay adown the croft
with me, O!'

'My granny nods before her wheel, and drops her reel,
and drops her reel;
My father with his crony talks as gay as gay can be, O!
But all the milk is yet to skim, ere light wax dim, ere
light wax dim;
How can I step adown the croft, my 'prentice lad,
with thee, O?'

'And must ye bide, yet waiting's long, and love is strong,
and love is strong;
And O! had I but served the time, that takes so long
to flee, O!

And thou, my lass, by morning's light wast all in white,
wast all in white,
And parson stood within the rails, a-marrying me and
thee, O.'

THE MIDDLE WATCH OF THE NIGHT.

I.

I WOKE in the night, and the darkness was heavy and
deep;
I had known it was dark in my sleep,
And I rose and looked out,
And the fathomless vault was all sparkling, set thick
round about
With the ancient inhabiters silent, and wheeling too far
For man's heart, like a voyaging frigate, to sail, where
remote
In the sheen of their glory they float,
Or man's soul, like a bird, to fly near, of their beams to
partake,
And dazed in their wake,
Drink day that is born of a star.
I murmured, 'Remoteness and greatness, how deep you
are set,
How afar in the rim of the whole;
You know nothing of me, or of man, nor of earth, O,
nor yet
Of our light-bearer—drawing the marvellous moons as
they roll,
Of our regent, the sun.

I look on you trembling, and think, in the dark with my
soul,
'How small is our place 'mid the kingdoms and nations
of God:
These are greater than we, every one.'
And there falls a great fear, and a dread cometh over,
that cries,
'O my hope! Is there any mistake?
Did He speak? Did I hear? Did I listen aright, if
He spake?
Did I answer Him duly? For surely I now am awake,
If never I woke until now.'
And a light, baffling wind, that leads nowhither, plays on
my brow.
As a sleep, I must think on my day, of my path as
untrod,
Or trodden in dreams, in a dreamland whose coasts are
a doubt;
Whose countries recede from my thoughts, as they grope
round about,
And vanish, and tell me not how.
Be kind to our darkness, O Fashioner, dwelling in light,
And feeding the lamps of the sky;
Look down upon this one, and let it be sweet in Thy sight,
I pray Thee, to-night.
O watch whom Thou madest to dwell on its soil, Thou
Most High!
For this is a world full of sorrow (there may be but
one);
Keep watch o'er its dust, else Thy children for aye are
undone,
For this is a world where we die.

II.

With that, a still voice in my spirit that moved and that
yearned,
(There fell a great calm while it spake),
I had heard it erewhile, but the noises of life are so loud,
That sometimes it dies in the cry of the street and the
crowd :
To the simple it cometh,—the child, or asleep, or awake,
And they know not from whence ; of its nature the wise
never learned
By his wisdom ; its secret the worker ne'er earned
By his toil ; and the rich among men never bought with
his gold ;
Nor the times of its visiting monarchs controlled,
Nor the jester put down with his jeers
(For it moves where it will), nor its season the
aged discerned
By thought, in the ripeness of years.

O elder than reason, and stronger than will !
A voice, when the dark world is still :
Whence cometh it ? Father Immortal, Thou knowest !
and we—
We are sure of that witness, that sense which is sent us
of Thee ;
For it moves, and it yearns in its fellowship mighty and
dread,
And let down to our hearts it is touched by the tears
that we shed ;
It is more than all meanings, and over all strife ;
On its tongue are the laws of our life,
And it counts up the times of the dead.

III

I will fear you, O stars, nevermore.
I have felt it! Go on, while the world is asleep,
Golden islands, fast moored in God's infinite deep.
Hark, hark to the words of sweet fashion, the harpings of yore!
How they sang to Him, seer and saint, in the far-away lands:
'The heavens are the work of Thy hands;
They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure;
Yea, they all shall wax old—
But Thy throne is established, O God, and Thy years are made sure;
They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure—
They shall pass like a tale that is told.'

Doth He answer, the Ancient of Days?
Will He speak in the tongue and the fashion of men?
(Hist! hist! while the heaven-hung multitudes shine in His praise,
His language of old.) Nay, He spoke with them first; it was then
They lifted their eyes to His throne:
'They shall call on Me, "Thou art our Father, our God, Thou alone!"
For I made them, I led them in deserts and desolate ways;
I have found them a Ranson Divine;
I have loved them with love everlasting, the children of men;
I swear by Myself, they are Mine.'

THE MORNING WATCH.

THE COMING IN OF THE 'MERMAIDEN.'

THE moon is bleached as white as wool,
And just dropping under;
Every star is gone but three,
And they hang far asunder—
There's a sea-ghost all in grey,
A tall shape of wonder!

I am not satisfied with sleep,—
The night is not ended.
But look how the sea-ghost comes,
With wan skirts extended,
Stealing up in this weird hour,
When light and dark are blended.

A vessel! To the old pier end
Her happy course she's keeping;
I heard them name her yesterday:
Some were pale with weeping;
Some with their heart-hunger sighed,
She's in—and they are sleeping.

O! now with fancied greetings blest,
They comfort their long aching:
The sea of sleep hath borne to them
What would not come with waking,
And the dreams shall most be true
In their blissful breaking.

The stars are gone, the rose-bloom comes—
  No blush of maid is sweeter;
The red sun, half-way out of bed,
  Shall be the first to greet her.
None tell the news, yet sleepers wake,
  And rise, and run to meet her.

Their lost they have, they hold; from pain
  A keener bliss they borrow.
How natural is joy, my heart!
  How easy after sorrow!
For once, the best is come that hope
  Promised them 'to-morrow.'

A SONG OF DAWN.

(*Old English Manner.*)

A MORN OF MAY.

ALL the clouds about the sun lay up in golden creases,
(Merry rings the maiden's voice that sings at dawn of day);
Lambkins woke and skipped around to dry their dewy fleeces,
So sweetly as she carolled, all on a morn of May.

Quoth the Sergeant, 'Here I'll halt; here's wine of joy for drinking;
To my heart she sets her hand, and in the strings doth play;
All among the daffodils, and fairer to my thinking,
And fresh as milk and roses, she sits this morn of May.'

Quoth the Sergeant, ‘ Work is work, but any ye might
make me,
If I worked for you, dear lass, I’d count my holiday.
I’m your slave for good and all, an’ if ye will but take me,
So sweetly as ye carol upon this morn of May.’

‘Medals count for worth,’ quoth she, ‘and scars are
worn for honour;
But a slave an’ if ye be, kind wooer, go your way.’
All the nodding daffodils woke up and laughed upon her.
O! sweetly did she carol, all on that morn of May.

Gladsome leaves upon the bough, they fluttered fast and
faster,
Fretting brook, till he would speak, did chide the dull
delay:
‘Beauty! when I said a slave, I think I meant a master;
So sweetly as ye carol all on this morn of May.

Lass, I love you! Love is strong, and some men’s
hearts are tender.’
Far she sought o’er wood and wold, but found not aught
to say;
Mounting lark nor mantling cloud would any counsel
render,
Though sweetly she had carolled upon that morn of
May.

Shy, she sought the wooer’s face, and deemed the
wooing mended;
Proper man he was, good sooth, and one would have his
way:
So the lass was made a wife, and so the song was ended.
O! sweetly she did carol all on that morn of May.

A DEAD YEAR.

I TOOK a year out of my life and story—
A dead year, and said, 'I will hew thee a tomb!
"All the kings of the nations lie in glory;"
Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom;
Swathed in linen, and precious unguents old;
Painted with cinnabar, and rich with gold.

'Silent they rest, in solemn salvatory,
Sealed from the moth and the owl and the flittermouse—
Each with his name on his brow.
"All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
Every one in his own house:"
Then why not thou?

'Year,' I said, 'thou shalt not lack
Bribes to bar thy coming back;
Doth old Egypt wear her best
In the chambers of her rest?
Doth she take to her last bed
Beaten gold, and glorious red?
Envy not! for thou wilt wear
In the dark a shroud as fair;
Golden with the sunny ray
Thou withdrawest from my day;
Wrought upon with colours fine
Stolen from this life of mine:

Like the dusty Libyan kings,
Lie with two wide-open wings
On thy breast, as if to say,
On these wings hope flew away;
And so housed, and thus adorned,
Not forgotten, but not scorned,
Let the dark for evermore
Close thee when I close the door;
And the dust for ages fall
In the creases of thy pall;
And no voice nor visit rude
Break thy sealèd solitude.'

I took the year out of my life and story,
The dead year, and said, 'I have hewed thee a tomb!
"All the kings of the nations lie in glory,"
Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom;
But for the sword, and the sceptre, and diadem,
Sure thou didst reign like them.'
So I laid her with those tyrants old and hoary,
According to my vow;
For I said, 'The kings of the nations lie in glory,
And so shalt thou!'

'Rock,' I said, 'thy ribs are strong,
That I bring thee guard it long;
Hide the light from buried eyes—
Hide it, lest the dead arise.'
'Year,' I said, and turned away,
'I am free of thee this day;
All that we two only know
I forgive and I forego,

So thy face no more I meet
In the field or in the street.'

Thus we parted, she and I;
Life hid death, and put it by;
Life hid death, and said, 'Be free!
I have no more need of thee.'
No more need! O mad mistake,
With repentance in its wake!
Ignorant, and rash, and blind,
Life had left the grave behind;
But had locked within its hold,
With the spices and the gold,
All she had to keep her warm
In the raging of the storm.
Scarce the sunset bloom was gone,
And the little stars outshone,
Ere the dead year, stiff and stark,
Drew me to her in the dark;
Death drew life to come to her,
Beating at her sepulchre,
Crying out, 'How can I part
With the best share of my heart?
Lo, it lies upon the bier,
Captive, with the buried year.
O my heart!' And I fell prone,
Weeping at the sealèd stone;
'Year among the shades,' I said,
'Since I live, and thou art dead,
Let my captive heart be free
Like a bird to fly to me.'
And I stayed some voice to win,
But none answered from within;

And I kissed the door—and night
Deepened till the stars waxed bright;
And I saw them set and wane.
And the world turned green again.

'So,' I whispered, 'open door,
I must tread this palace floor—
Sealèd palace, rich and dim.
Let a narrow sunbeam swim
After me, and on me spread
While I look upon my dead;
Let a little warmth be free
To come after; let me see
Through the doorway, when I sit
Looking out, the swallows flit,
Settling not till daylight goes;
Let me smell the wild white rose,
Smell the woodbine and the may;
Mark, upon a sunny day,
Sated from their blossoms rise
Honey-bees and butterflies.
Let me hear, O! let me hear,
Sitting by my buried year,
Finches chirping to their young,
And the little noises flung
Out of clefts where rabbits play,
Or from falling water-spray;
And the gracious echoes woke
By man's work: the woodman's stroke,
Shout of shepherds, whistlings blithe,
And the whetting of the scythe;
Let this be, lest, shut and furled
From the well-belovèd world,

I forget her yearnings old,
And her troubles manifold,
Strivings sore, submissions meet,
And my pulse no longer beat,
Keeping time and bearing part
With the pulse of her great heart.

'So! swing open door, and shade
Take me: I am not afraid,
For the time will not be long;
Soon I shall have waxen strong—
Strong enough my own to win
From the grave it lies within.'

And I entered. On her bier
Quiet lay the buried year;
I sat down where I could see
Life without and sunshine free,
Death within. And I between
Waited my own heart to wean
From the shroud that shaded her
In the rock-hewn sepulchre—
Waited till the dead should say,
'Heart, be free of me this day'—
Waited with a patient will—
AND I WAIT BETWEEN THEM STILL.

I take the year back to my life and story,
The dead year, and say, 'I will share in thy tomb.
"All the kings of the nations lie in glory;"
Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom!
They reigned in their lifetime with sceptre and diadem,
But thou excellest them;

For life doth make thy grave her oratory.
And the crown is still on thy brow;
"All the kings of the nations lie in glory,"
And so dost thou.'

AN ANCIENT CHESS KING

HAPLY some Rajah first in the ages gone
Amid his languid ladies fingered thee,
While a black nightingale, sun-swart as he,
Sang his one wife, love's passionate oraison;
Haply thou may'st have pleased Old Prester John
Among his pastures, when full royally
He sat in tent, grave shepherds at his knee,
While lamps of balsam winked and glimmered on.
What doest thou here? Thy masters are all dead;
My heart is full of ruth and yearning pain
At sight of thee; O king that hast a crown
Outlasting theirs, and tell'st of greatness fled
Through cloud-hung nights of unabated rain
And murmurs of the dark majestic town.

A SNOW MOUNTAIN.

CAN I make white enough my thought for thee,
Or wash my words in light? Thou hast no mate
To sit aloft in the silence silently
And twin those matchless heights undesecrate.

Reverend as Lear, when, lorn of shelter, he
  Stood, with his old white head, surprised at fate;
Alone as Galileo, when, set free,
  Before the stars he mused disconsolate.
Ay, and remote, as the dead lords of song,
  Great masters who have made us what we are,
For thou and they have taught us how to long
  And feel a sacred want of the fair and far:
Reign, and keep life in this our deep desire—
Our only greatness is that we aspire.

SLEEP.

(*A woman speaks.*)

O SLEEP, we are beholden to thee, sleep,
  Thou bearest angels to us in the night,
  Saints out of heaven with palms. Seen by thy light
Sorrow is some old tale that goeth not deep;
Love is a pouting child. Once I did sweep
  Through space with thee, and lo, a dazzling sight—
  Stars! They came on, I felt their drawing and might:
And some had dark companions. Once (I weep
When I remember that) we sailed the tide,
And found fair isles, where no isles used to bide,
  And met there my lost love, who said to me,
That 'twas a long mistake: he had not died.
  Sleep, in the world to come how strange 'twill be
  Never to want, never to wish for thee!

COMPENSATION.

ONE launched a ship, but she was wrecked at
sea;
He built a bridge, but floods have borne it down;
He meant much good, none came: strange destiny,
His corn lies sunk, his bridge bears none to town,
Yet good he had not meant became his crown;
For once at work, when even as nature free,
From thought of good he was, or of renown,
God took the work for good and let good be.
So wakened with a trembling after sleep,
Dread Mona Roa yields her fateful store;
All gleaming hot the scarlet rivers creep,
And fanned of great-leaved palms slip to the shore,
Then stolen to unplumbed wastes of that far deep,
Lay the foundations for one island more.

DIVIDED.

I.

AN empty sky, a world of heather,
Purple of foxglove, yellow of broom;
We two among them wading together,
Shaking out honey, treading perfume.

Crowds of bees are giddy with clover,
Crowds of grasshoppers skip at our feet
Crowds of larks at their matins hang over,
Thanking the Lord for a life so sweet.

Flusheth the rise with her purple favour,
Gloweth the cleft with her golden ring,
'Twixt the two brown butterflies waver,
Lightly settle, and sleepily swing.

We two walk till the purple dieth
And short dry grass under foot is brown;
But one little streak at a distance lieth
Green like a ribbon to prank the down.

II.

Over the grass we stepped unto it,
And God He knoweth how blithe we were!
Never a voice to bid us eschew it:
Hey the green ribbon that showed so fair!

Hey the green ribbon! we kneeled beside it,
We parted the grasses dewy and sheen;
Drop over drop there filtered and slided
A tiny bright beck that trickled between.

Tinkle, tinkle, sweetly it sang to us,
Light was our talk as of faëry bells—
Faëry wedding-bells faintly rung to us
Down in their fortunate parallels.

Hand in hand, while the sun peered over,
  We lapped the grass on that youngling spring;
Swept back its rushes, smoothed its clover,
  And said, 'Let us follow it westering.'

III.

A dappled sky, a world of meadows,
  Circling above us the black rooks fly
Forward, backward; lo, their dark shadows
  Flit on the blossoming tapestry—

Flit on the beck. for her long grass parteth
  As hair from a maid's bright eyes blown back
And, lo, the sun like a lover darteth
  His flattering smile on her wayward track.

Sing on! we sing in the glorious weather
  Till one steps over the tiny strand,
So narrow, in sooth, that still together
  On either brink we go hand in hand.

The beck grows wider, the hands must sever.
  On either margin, our songs all done,
We move apart, while she singeth ever,
  Taking the course of the stooping sun.

He prays, 'Come over'—I may not follow;
  I cry, 'Return'—but he cannot come:
We speak, we laugh, but with voices hollow;
  Our hands are hanging, our hearts are numb.

IV.

A breathing sigh, a sigh for answer,
  A little talking of outward things:
The careless beck is a merry dancer,
  Keeping sweet time to the air she sings.

A little pain when the beck grows wider;
  'Cross to me now—for her wavelets swell;'
'I may not cross'—and the voice beside her
  Faintly reacheth, though heeded well.

No backward path; ah! no returning:
  No second crossing that ripple's flow:
'Come to me now, for the west is burning;
  Come ere it darkens;'—'Ah, no! ah, no!

Then cries of pain, and arms outreaching—
  The beck grows wider and swift and deep:
Passionate words as of one beseeching—
  The loud beck drowns them; we walk, and weep.

V.

A yellow moon in splendour drooping,
  A tired queen with her state oppressed,
Low by rushes and swordgrass stooping,
  Lies she soft on the waves at rest.

The desert heavens have felt her sadness;
  Her earth will weep her some dewy tears;
The wild beck ends her tune of gladness,
  And goeth stilly as soul that fears.

We two walk on in our grassy places
  On either marge of the moonlit flood,
With the moon's own sadness in our faces,
  Where joy is withered, blossom and bud.

VI.

A shady freshness, chafers whirring,
  A little piping of leaf-hid birds;
A flutter of wings, a fitful stirring,
  A cloud to the eastward snowy as curds.

Bare grassy slopes, where kids are tethered;
  Round valleys like nests all fern ylined;
Round hills, with fluttering tree-tops feathered,
  Swell high in their freckled robes behind.

A rose-flush tender, a thrill, a quiver,
  When golden gleams to the tree-tops glide;
A flashing edge for the milk-white river,
  The beck, a river—with still sleek tide.

Broad and white, and polished as silver,
  On she goes under fruit-laden trees;
Sunk in leafage cooeth the culver,
  And 'plaineth of love's disloyalties.

Glitters the dew and shines the river,
  Up comes the lily and dries her bell;
But two are walking apart for ever,
  And wave their hands for a mute farewell.

VII.

A braver swell, a swifter sliding;
The river hasteth, her banks recede:
Wing-like sails on her bosom gliding
Bear down the lily and drown the reed.

Stately prows are rising and bowing
(Shouts of mariners winnow the air),
And level sands for banks endowing
The tiny green ribbon that showed so fair.

While, O my heart! as white sails shiver,
And crowds are passing, and banks stretch wide
How hard to follow, with lips that quiver,
That moving speck on the far-off side!

Farther, farther—I see it—know it—
My eyes brim over, it melts away:
Only my heart to my heart shall show it
As I walk desolate day by day.

VIII.

And yet I know past all doubting, truly—
A knowledge greater than grief can dim—
I know, as he loved, he will love me duly—
Yea, better—e'en better than I love him.

And as I walk by the vast calm river,
The awful river so dread to see,
I say, 'Thy breadth and thy depth for ever
Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me.'

A TOWING SONG.

I.

WHEN I sit on market-days amid the comers and the goers,
Oh! full oft I have a vision of the days without alloy,
And a ship comes up the river with a jolly gang of towers,
And a 'pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!'

II.

There is busy talk around me, all about mine ears it hummeth,
But the wooden wharves I look on, and a dancing, heaving buoy,
For 'tis tidetime in the river, and she cometh—oh, she cometh!
With a 'pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!

III.

Then I hear the water washing, never golden waves were brighter,
And I hear the capstan creaking—'tis a sound that cannot cloy.
Bring her to, to ship her lading, brig or schooner, sloop or lighter,
With a 'pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!'

IV.

'Will ye step aboard, my dearest? for the high seas lie
before us.'
So I sailed adown the river in those days without
alloy.
We are launched! But when, I wonder, shall a sweeter
sound float o'er us
Than yon 'pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave,
hoy!'

LIKE A LAV'ROCK IN THE LIFT.

I.

IT'S we two, it's we two, it's we two for aye,
All the world and we two, and Heaven rest our
stay!
Like a lav'rock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!
All the world was Adam once, with Eve by his side.

II.

What's the world, my lass, my love!—what can it do?
I am thine, and thou art mine; life is sweet and new.
If the world have missed the mark, let it stand by,
For we two have gotten leave, and once more we'll try.

III.

Like a lav'rock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!
It's we two, and we two, happy side by side.

Take a kiss from me thy man; now the song begins:
All is made afresh for us, and the brave heart wins.'

IV.

When the darker days come, and no sun will shine,
Thou shalt dry my tears, lassie, I'll dry thine.
It's we two, it's we two, while the world's away,
Sitting by the golden sheaves on our wedding-day.

THE DOVE SAID 'GIVE US PEACE.'

ONE morning, oh! so early, my belovèd, my be-
lovèd,
All the birds were singing blithely, as if never they
would cease;
'Twas a thrush sang in my garden, 'Hear the story, hear
the story!'
And the lark sang, 'Give us glory!'
And the dove said, 'Give us peace!'

Then I hearkened, oh! so early, my belovèd, my be-
lovèd,
To that murmur from the woodland of the dove, my
dear, the dove;
When the nightingale came after, 'Give us fame to
sweeten duty!'
When the wren sang, 'Give us beauty!'
She made answer, 'Give us love!'

Sweet is spring, and sweet the morning, my belovèd, my
belovèd;
Now for us doth spring, doth morning, wait upon the
year's increase,
And my prayer goes up, 'Oh, give us, crowned in youth
with marriage glory,
Give for all our life's dear story,
Give us love, and give us peace!'

THE LETTER L.

ABSENT.

WE sat on grassy slopes that meet
With sudden dip the level strand;
The trees hung overhead—our feet
Were on the sand.

Two silent girls, a thoughtful man,
We sunned ourselves in open light,
And felt such April airs as fan
The Isle of Wight;

And smelt the wall-flower in the crag
Whereon that dainty waft had fed,
Which made the bell-hung cowslip wag
Her delicate head;

And let alighting jackdaws fleet
Adown it open-winged, and pass
Till they could touch with outstretched feet
The warmèd grass.

The happy wave ran up and rang
  Like service bells a long way off,
And down a little freshet sprang
      From mossy trough,

And splashed into a rain of spray,
  And fretted on with daylight's loss,
Because so many bluebells lay
      Leaning across.

Blue martins gossiped in the sun,
  And pairs of chattering daws flew by,
And sailing brigs rocked softly on
      In company.

Wild cherry boughs above us spread
  The whitest shade was ever seen,
And flicker, flicker, came and fled
      Sun spots between.

Bees murmured in the milk-white bloom
  As babes will sigh for deep content
When their sweet hearts for peace make room,
      As given, not lent.

And we saw on: we said no word,
  And one was lost in musings rare,
One buoyant as the waft that stirred
      Her shining hair.

His eyes were bent upon the sand;
  Unfathomed deeps within them lay.
A slender rod was in his hand—
      A hazel spray.

Her eyes were resting on his face,
As shyly glad, by stealth to glean
Impressions of his manly grace
And guarded mien ;

The mouth with steady sweetness set,
And eyes conveying unaware
The distant hint of some regret
That harboured there.

She gazed, and in the tender flush
That made her face like roses blown,
And in the radiance and the hush,
Her thought was shown.

It was a happy thing to sit
So near, nor mar his reverie ;
She looked not for a part in it,
So meek was she.

But it was solace for her eyes,
And for her heart, that yearned to him,
To watch apart in loving wise
Those musings dim.

Lost—lost, and gone ! The Pelham woods
Were full of doves that cooed at ease ;
The orchis filled her purple hoods
For dainty bees.

He heard not ; all the delicate air
Was fresh with falling water-spray :
It mattered not—he was not there,
But far away.

Till with the hazel in his hand,
  Still drowned in thought, it thus befell:
He drew a letter on the sand—
          The letter L.

And looking on it, straight there wrought
  A ruddy flush about his brow;
His letter woke him: absent thought
          Rushed homeward now.

And half-abashed, his hasty touch
  Effaced it with a tell-tale care,
As if his action had been much,
          And not his air.

And she? she watched his open palm
  Smooth out the letter from the sand,
And rose, with aspect almost calm,
          And filled her hand

With cherry bloom, and moved away
  To gather wild forget-me-not,
And let her errant footsteps stray
          To one sweet spot,

As if she coveted the fair
  White lining of the silver-weed,
And cuckoo-pint that shaded there
          Empurpled seed.

She had not feared, as I divine,
  Because she had not hoped, Alas!
The sorrow of it! for that sign
          Came but to pass;

And yet it robbed her of the right
  To give, who looked not to receive,
And made her blush in love's despite
    That she should grieve.

A shape in white, she turned to gaze;
  Her eyes were shaded with her hand,
And half-way up the winding ways
    We saw her stand.

Green hollows of the fringèd cliff,
  Red rocks that under waters show
Blue reaches, and a sailing skiff,
    Were spread below.

She stood to gaze, perhaps to sigh,
  Perhaps to think; but who can tell,
How heavy on her heart must lie
    The letter L!

She came anon with quiet grace;
  And 'What,' she murmured, 'silent yet!'
He answered, ''Tis a haunted place,
    And spell-beset.

'O speak to us, and break the spell!'
  'The spell is broken,' she replied.
'I crossed the running brook, it fell,
    It could not bide.

'And I have brought a budding world,
  Of orchis spires and daisies rank,
And ferny plumes but half uncurled,
    From yonder bank;

'And I shall weave of them a crown,
And at the well-head launch it free,
That so the brook may float it down,
And out to sea.

'There may it to some English hands
From fairy meadow seem to come;
The fairyest of fairy lands—
The land of home.'

'Weave on,' he said, and as she wove
We told how currents in the deep,
With branches from a lemon grove,
Blue bergs will sweep;

And messages from shipwrecked folk
Will navigate the moon-led main,
And painted boards of splintered oak
Their port regain.

Then floated out by vagrant thought,
My soul beheld on torrid sand
The wasteful water set at nought
Man's skilful hand,

And suck out gold-dust from the box.
And wash it down in weedy whirls,
And split the wine-keg on the rocks,
And lose the pearls.

'Ah! why to that which needs it not,'
Methought, 'should costly things be given?
How much is wasted, wrecked, forgot,
On this side heaven!'

So musing, did mine ears awake
  To maiden tones of sweet reserve,
And manly speech that seemed to make
    The steady curve

Of lips that uttered it defer
  Their guard, and soften for the thought:
She listened, and his talk with her
    Was fancy-fraught.

'There is not much in liberty'—
  With doubtful pauses he began;
And said to her and said to me,
    'There was a man—

'There was a man who dreamed one night
  That his dead father came to him;
And said, when fire was low, and light
    Was burning dim—

' "Why vagrant thus, my sometime pride,
  Unloved, unloving, wilt thou roam?
Sure home is best!" The son replied,
    "I have no home."

' "Shall not I speak?" his father said,
  "Who early chose a youthful wife,
And worked for her, and with her led
    My happy life.

' "Ay, I will speak, for I was young
  As thou art now, when I did hold
The prattling sweetness of thy tongue
    Dearer than gold;

'"And rosy from thy noonday sleep
Would bear thee to admiring kin,
And all thy pretty looks would keep
My heart within.

'"Then after, 'mid thy young allies—
For thee ambition flushed my brow—
I coveted the schoolboy prize
Far more than thou.

'"I thought for thee, I thought for all
My gamesome imps that round me grew
The dews of blessing heaviest fall
Where care falls too.

'"And I that sent my boys away,
In youthful strength to earn their bread,
And died before the hair was grey
Upon my head—

'"I say to thee, though free from care,
A lonely lot, an aimless life,
The crowning comfort is not there—
Son, take a wife."

'"Father beloved," the son replied,
And failed to gather to his breast,
With arms in darkness searching wide,
The formless guest.

'"I am but free, as sorrow is,
To dry her tears, to laugh, to talk;
And free, as sick men are, I wis,
To rise and walk,

'" And free, as poor men are, to buy
  If they have nought wherewith to pay ;
Nor hope, the debt before they die,
    To wipe away.

'" What 'vails it there are wives to win,
  And faithful hearts for those to yearn,
Who find not aught thereto akin
    To make return ?

'" Shall he take much who little gives,
  And dwells in spirit far away,
When she that in his presence lives,
    Doth never stray,

'" But waking, guideth as beseems
  The happy house in order trim,
And tends her babes ; and sleeping, dreams
    Of them, and him ?

'" O base, O cold,"—while thus he spake
  The dream broke off, the vision fled ;
He carried on his speech awake
    And sighing said—

'" I had—ah happy man !—I had
  A precious jewel in my breast,
And while I kept it I was glad
    At work, at rest !

'" Call it a heart, and call it strong
  As upward stroke of eagle's wing ;
Then call it weak, you shall not wrong
    The beating thing.

‘ “ In tangles of the jungle reed,
Whose heats are lit with tiger eyes,
In shipwreck drifting with the weed
’Neath rainy skies,

‘ “ Still youthful manhood, fresh and keen,
At danger gazed with awed delight,
As if sea would not drown, I ween,
Nor serpent bite.

‘ “ I had—ah happy! but ’tis gone,
The priceless jewel; one came by,
And saw and stood awhile to con
With curious eye,

‘ “ And wished for it, and faintly smiled
From under lashes black as doom,
With subtle sweetness, tender, mild,
That did illume

‘ “ The perfect face, and shed on it
A charm, half feeling, half surprise,
And brim with dreams the exquisite
Brown blessèd eyes.

‘ “ Was it for this, no more but this,
I took and laid it in her hand,
By dimples ruled, to hint submiss,
By frown unmanned?

‘ “ It was for this—and O farewell
The fearless foot, the present mind,
And steady will to breast the swell
And face the wind!

'"I gave the jewel from my breast,
She played with it a little while
As I sailed down into the west,
Fed by her smile;

'"Then weary of it—far from land,
With sigh as deep as destiny,
She let it drop from her fair hand
Into the sea

'"And watched it sink; and I—and I,—
What shall I do, for all is vain?
No wave will bring, no gold will buy,
No toil attain;

'"Nor any diver reach to raise
My jewel from the blue abyss;
Or could they, still I should but praise
Their work amiss.

'"Thrown, thrown away! But I love yet
The fair, fair hand which did the deed:
That wayward sweetness to forget
Were bitter meed.

'"No, let it lie, and let the wave
Roll over it for evermore;
Whelmed where the sailor hath his grave—
The sea her store.

'"My heart, my sometime happy heart!
And O for once let me complain,
I must forego life's better part—
Man's dearer gain.

'"I worked afar that I might rear
A peaceful home on English soil;
I laboured for the gold and gear—
I loved my toil.

'"For ever in my spirit spake
The natural whisper, 'Well 'twill be
When loving wife and children break
Their bread with thee!'

'"The gathered gold is turned to dross,
The wife hath faded into air,
My heart is thrown away, my loss
I cannot spare.

'"Not spare unsated thought her food—
No, not one rustle of the fold,
Nor scent of eastern sandalwood,
Nor gleam of gold;

'"Nor quaint devices of the shawl,
Far less the drooping lashes meek:
The gracious figure, lithe and tall,
The dimpled cheek;

'"And all the wonders of her eyes,
And sweet caprices of her air,
Albeit, indignant reason cries,
Fool! have a care.

'"Fool! join not madness to mistake;
Thou knowest she loved thee not a whit;
Only that she thy heart might break—
She wanted it,

'"Only the conquered thing to chain
So fast that none might set it free,
Nor other woman there might reign
And comfort thee.

'"Robbed, robbed of life's illusions sweet;
Love dead outside her closèd door,
And passion fainting at her feet
To wake no more;

'"What canst thou give that unknown bride
Whom thou didst work for in the waste,
Ere fated love was born, and cried—
Was dead, ungraced?

'"No more but this, the partial care,
The natural kindness for its own,
The trust that waxeth unaware,
As worth is known:

'"Observance, and complacent thought
Indulgent, and the honour due
That many another man has brought
Who brought love too.

'"Nay, then, forbid it, Heaven!" he said,
"The saintly vision fades from me;
O bands and chains! I cannot wed—
I am not free."'

With that he raised his face to view;
'What think you,' asking, 'of my tale?
And was he right to let the dew
Of morn exhale,

'And burdened in the noontide sun,
The grateful shade of home forego—
Could he be right?—I ask as one
Who fain would know.'

He spoke to her and spoke to me;
The rebel rose-hue dyed her cheek;
The woven crown lay on her knee;
She would not speak.

And I with doubtful pause—averse
To let occasion drift away—
I answered—'If his case were worse
Than word can say,

'Time is a healer of sick hearts,
And women have been known to choose,
With purpose to allay their smarts,
And tend their bruise,

'These for themselves. Content to give,
In their own lavish love complete,
Taking for sole prerogative
Their tendance sweet.

'Such meeting in their diadem
Of crowning love's æthereal fire,
Himself he robs who robbeth them
Of their desire.

'Therefore the man who, dreaming, cried
Against his lot that evensong,
I judge him honest, and decide
That he was wrong.'

'When I am judged, ah may my fate,'
He whispered, 'in thy code be read!
Be thou both judge and advocate.'
Then turned, he said—

'Fair weaver!' touching, while he spoke,
The woven crown, the weaving hand,
'And do you this decree revoke,
Or may it stand?

'This friend, you ever think her right—
She is not wrong, then?' Soft and low
The little trembling word took flight:
She answered, 'No.'

PRESENT.

A meadow where the grass was deep,
Rich, square, and golden to the view,
A belt of elms with level sweep
About it grew.

The sun beat down on it, the line
Of shade was clear beneath the trees;
There, by a clustering eglantine,
We sat at ease.

And O the buttercups! that field
O' the cloth of gold, where pennons swam—
Where France set up his lilied shield,
His oriflamb,

And Henry's lion-standard rolled:
  What was it to their matchless sheen,
Their million million drops of gold
    Among the green!

We sat at ease in peaceful trust,
  For he had written, 'Let us meet;
My wife grew tired of smoke and dust,
    And London heat,

'And I have found a quiet grange,
  Set back in meadows sloping west,
And there our little ones can range
    And she can rest.

'Come down, that we may show the view,
  And she may hear your voice again,
And talk her woman's talk with you
    Along the lane.'

Since he had drawn with listless hand
  The letter, six long years had fled,
And winds had blown about the sand,
    And they were wed.

Two rosy urchins near him played,
  Or watched, entranced, the shapely ships
That with his knife for them he made
    Of elder slips.

And where the flowers were thickest shed,
  Each blossom like a burnished gem,
A creeping baby reared its head,
    And cooed at them.

And calm was on the father's face,
And love was in the mother's eyes;
She looked and listened from her place,
In tender wise.

She did not need to raise her voice
That they might hear, she sat so nigh;
Yet we could speak when 't was our choice,
And soft reply,

Holding our quiet talk apart
Of household things; till, all unsealed,
The guarded outworks of the heart
Began to yield;

And much that prudence will not dip
The pen to fix and send away,
Passed safely over from the lip
That summer day.

'I should be happy,' with a look
Towards her husband where he lay,
Lost in the pages of his book,
Soft did she say.

'I am, and yet no lot below
For one whole day eludeth care;
To marriage all the stories flow,
And finish there:

'As if with marriage came the end,
The entrance into settled rest,
The calm to which love's tossings tend,
The quiet breast.

'For me love played the low preludes,
Yet life began but with the ring,
Such infinite solicitudes
Around it cling.

'I did not for my heart divine
Her destiny so meek to grow;
The higher nature matched with mine
Will have it so.

'Still I consider it, and still
Acknowledge it my master made,
Above me by the steadier will
Of nought afraid—

'Above me by the candid speech;
The temperate judgment of its own:
The keener thoughts that grasp and reach
At things unknown.

'But I look up and he looks down,
And thus our married eyes can meet;
Unclouded his, and clear of frown,
And gravely sweet.

'And yet, O good, O wise and true!
I would, for all my fealty,
That I could be as much to you
As you to me;

'And knew the deep secure content
Of wives who have been hardly won,
And, long petitioned, gave assent,
Jealous of none;

'But proudly sure in all the earth
No other in that homage shares,
Nor other woman's face or worth
Is prized as theirs.'

I said: '*And yet no lot below*
For one whole day eludeth care.
Your thought.' She answered, 'Even so.
I would beware.

'Regretful questionings; be sure
That very seldom do they rise,
Not for myself do I endure—
I sympathise.

'For once'—she turned away her head,
Across the grass she swept her hand—
'There was a letter once,' she said,
'Upon the sand.'

'There was, in truth, a letter writ
On sand,' I said, 'and swept from view;
But that same hand which fashioned it
Is given to you.

'Efface the letter; wherefore keep
An image which the sands forego?'
'Albeit that fear had seemed to sleep,'
She answered low,

'I could not choose but wake it now;
For do but turn aside your face,
A house on yonder hilly brow
Your eyes may trace.

The chestnut shelters it; ah me,
  That I should have so faint a heart!
But yestereve, as by the sea
      I sat apart,

'I heard a name, I saw a hand
  Of passing stranger point that way—
And will he meet her on the strand,
      When late we stray?

'For she is come, for she is there,
  I heard it in the dusk, and heard
Admiring words, that named her fair,
      But little stirred

'By beauty of the wood and wave,
  And weary of an old man's sway;
For it was sweeter to enslave
      Than to obey.'

—The voice of one that near us stood,
  The rustle of a silken fold,
A scent of eastern sandalwood,
      A gleam of gold!

A lady! In the narrow space
  Between the husband and the wife,
But nearest him—she showed a face
      With dangers rife;

A subtle smile that dimpling fled,
  As night-black lashes rose and fell:
I looked, and to myself I said,
      'The letter L.'

He, too, looked up, and with arrest
  Of breath and motion held his gaze,
Nor cared to hide within his breast
    His deep amaze;

Nor spoke till on her near advance
  His dark cheek flushed a ruddier hue;
And with his change of countenance
    Hers altered too.

'Lenore!' his voice was like the cry
  Of one entreating; and he said
But that—then paused with such a sigh
    As mourns the dead.

And seated near, with no demur
  Of bashful doubt she silence broke,
Though I alone could answer her
    When first she spoke.

She looked: her eyes were beauty's own;
  She shed their sweetness into his;
Nor spared the married wife one moan
    That bitterest is.

She spoke, and lo, her loveliness
  Methought she damaged with her tongue
And every sentence made it less,
    All falsely rung.

The rallying voice, the light demand,
  Half flippant, half unsatisfied;
The vanity sincere and bland—
    The answers wide.

And now her talk was of the East,
  And next her talk was of the sea ;
'And has the love for it increased
    You shared with me ?'

He answered not, but grave and still
  With earnest eyes her face perused,
And locked his lips with steady will,
    As one that mused—

That mused and wondered. Why his gaze
  Should dwell on her, methought, was plain ;
But reason that should wonder raise
    I sought in vain.

And near and near the children drew,
  Attracted by her rich array,
And gems that trembling into view
    Like raindrops lay.

He spoke : the wife her baby took
  And pressed the little face to hers ;
What pain soe'er her bosom shook,
    What jealous stirs

Might stab her heart, she hid them so,
  The cooing babe a veil supplied ;
And if she listened none might know,
    Or if she sighed ;

Or if forecasting grief and care
  Unconscious solace thence she drew,
And lulled her babe, and unaware
    Lulled sorrow too.

The lady, she interpreter
For looks or language wanted none,
If yet dominion stayed with her—
So lightly won;

If yet the heart she wounded sore
Could yearn to her, and let her see
The homage that was evermore
Disloyalty;

If sign would yield that it had bled,
Or rallied from the faithless blow,
Or sick or sullen stooped to wed,
She craved to know.

Now dreamy deep, now sweetly keen,
Her asking eyes would round him shine;
But guarded lips and settled mien
Refused the sign.

And unbeguiled and unbetrayed,
The wonder yet within his breast,
It seemed a watchful part he played
Against her quest.

Until with accent of regret
She touched upon the past once more,
As if she dared him to forget
His dream of yore,

And words of little weight let fall
The fancy of the lower mind;
How waxing life must needs leave all
Its best behind;

How he had said that, 'he would fain
 (One morning on the halcyon sea)
That life would at a stand remain
 Eternally ;

'And sails be mirrored in the deep,
 As then they were, for evermore,
And happy spirits wake and sleep
 Afar from shore :

'The well-contented heart be fed
 Ever as then, and all the world
(It were not small) unshadowèd
 When sails were furled.

'Your words'—a pause, and quietly
 With touch of calm self-ridicule :
'It may be so—for then,' said he,
 'I was a fool.'

With that he took his book, and left
 An awkward silence to my care,
That soon I filled with questions deft
 And bebonair ;

And slid into an easy vein.
 The favourite picture of the year ;
The grouse upon her lord's domain—
 The salmon weir ;

Till she could feign a sudden thought,
 Upon neglected guests, and rise,
And make us her adieux, with nought
 In her dark eyes.

Acknowledging or shame or pain ;
But just unveiling for our view
A little smile of still disdain
As she withdrew.

Then nearer did the sunshine creep,
And warmer came the wafting breeze ;
The little babe was fast asleep
On mother's knees.

Fair was the face that o'er it leant,
The cheeks with beauteous blushes dyed
The downcast lashes, shyly bent,
That failed to hide

Some tender shame. She did not see ;
She felt his eyes that would not stir,
She looked upon her babe, and he
So looked at her.

So grave, so wondering, so content,
As one new waked to conscious life,
Whose sudden joy with fear is blent,
He said, 'My wife.'

'My wife, how beautiful you are!'
Then closer at her side reclined,
'The bold brown woman from afar
Comes to me blind.

'And by comparison, I see
The majesty of matron grace,
And learn how pure, how fair can be
My own wife's face :

'Pure with all faithful passion, fair
With tender smiles that come and go;
And comforting as April air
After the snow.

'Fool that I was! my spirit frets
And marvels at the humbling truth,
That I have deigned to spend regrets
On my bruised youth.

'Its idol mocked thee, seated nigh,
And shamed me for the mad mistake;
I thank my God He could deny,
And she forsake.

'Ah, who am I, that God hath saved
Me from the doom I did desire,
And crossed the lot myself had craved,
To set me higher?

'What have I done that He should bow
From heaven to choose a wife for me?
And what deserved, He should endow
My home with THEE?

'My wife!' With that she turned her face
To kiss the hand about her neck;
And I went down and sought the place
Where leaped the beck—

The busy beck, that still would run
And fall, and falter its refrain;
And pause and shimmer in the sun,
And fall again.

It led me to the sandy shore,
We sang together, it and I—
'The daylight comes, the dark is o'er,
The shadows fly.'

I lost it on the sandy shore,
'O wife!' its latest murmurs fell,
'O wife, be glad, and fear no more
The letter L.'

THOUGH ALL GREAT DEEDS.

THOUGH all great deeds were proved but fables fine
Though earth's old story could be told anew,
Though the sweet fashions loved of them that sue
Were empty as the ruined Delphian shrine—
Though God did never man, in words benign,
With sense of His great Fatherhood endue,
Though life immortal were a dream untrue,
And He that promised it were not divine—
Though soul, though spirit were not, and all hope
Reaching beyond the bourne, melted away;
Though virtue had no goal and good no scope,
But both were doomed to end with this our clay—
Though all these were not,—to the ungraced heir
Would this remain,—to live, as though they were.

WISHING.

WHEN I reflect how little I have done,
And add to that how little I have seen,
Then furthermore how little I have won
Of joy, or good, how little known, or been:
I long for other life more full, more keen,
And yearn to change with such as well have run—
Yet reason mocks me—nay, the soul, I ween,
Granted her choice would dare to change with none;
No,—not to feel, as Blondel when his lay
Pierced the strong tower, and Richard answered it—
No, not to do, as Eustace on the day
He left fair Calais to her weeping fit—
No, not to be,—Columbus, waked from sleep
When his new world rose from the charmèd deep.

FAILURE.

WE are much bound to them that do succeed;
But, in a more pathetic sense, are bound
To such as fail. They all our loss expound;
They comfort us for work that will not speed,
And life—itself a failure. Ay, his deed,
Sweetest in story, who the dusk profound
Of Hades flooded with entrancing sound,
Music's own tears, was failure. Doth it read

Therefore the worse? Ah, no! So much to dare,
He fronts the regnant Darkness on its throne.—
So much to do; impetuous even there,
He pours out love's disconsolate sweet moan—
He wins; but few for that his deed recall:
Its power is in the look which costs him all.

FROM 'THE BELL-BIRD.'

SCENE.—*A home in the Australian bush. Present—a father, a mother, and a son. The bell-bird sounds, and the father speaks.*

'TOLL—
Toll.' 'The bell-bird sounding far away,
Hid in a myall grove.' He raised his head,
The bush glowed scarlet in descending day,
A masterless wild country—and he said,
My father ('Toll'). 'Full oft by her to stray,
As if a spirit called, have I been led;
Oft seems she as an echo in my soul—
('Toll')—from my native towers by Avon' ('Toll').

('Toll.') 'Oft as in a dream I see full fain
The bell-tower beautiful that I love well,
A seemly cluster with her churches twain.
I hear adown the river faint and swell
And lift upon the air that sound again,
It is, it is—how sweet no tongue can tell,
For all the world-wide breadth of shining foam,
The bells of Evesham chiming "Home, sweet home."

'The mind hath mastery thus—it can defy
The sense, and make all one as it DID HEAR—
Nay, I mean more; the wraiths of sound gone by
Rise; they are present 'neath this dome all clear.
ONE, sounds the bird—a pause—then doth supply
Some ghost of chimes the void expectant ear;
Do they ring bells in heaven? The learnedest soul
Shall not resolve me such a question. ('Toll.')

('Toll.') 'Say I am a boy, and fishing stand
By Avon—('Toll')—on line and rod intent,
How glitters deep in dew the meadow land—
What, dost thou flit, thy ministry all spent,
Not many days we hail such visits bland,
Why steal so soon the rare enravishment?
Ay gone! the soft deceptive echoes roll
Away, and faint into remoteness.' ('Toll.')

While thus he spoke the doom'd sun touched his bed
In scarlet, all the palpitating air
Still loyal waited on. He dipped his head,
Then all was over, and the dark was there;
And northward, lo! a star, one likewise red
But lurid, starts from out her day-long lair,
Her fellows trail behind; she bears her part,
The balefullest star that shines, the Scorpion's heart.

Or thus of old men feigned, and then did fear,
Then straight crowd forth the great ones of the sky
In flashing flame at strife to reach more near.
The little children of Infinity,
They next look down as to report them 'Here,'
From deeps all thoughts despair and heights past high

Speeding, not sped, no rest, no goal, no shore,
Still to rush on till time shall be no more.

'Loved vale of Evesham, 'tis a long farewell,
  Not laden orchards nor their April snow
These eyes shall light upon again : the swell
  And whisper of thy storied river know,
Nor climb the hill where great De Montfort fell
  In a good cause hundreds of years ago ;
So fall'n, elect to live till life's ally,
The river of recorded deeds, runs dry.

'This land is very well, this air,' saith he,
  'Is very well, but we want echoes here
Man's past to feed the air and move the sea ;
  Ages of toil make English furrows dear,
Enriched by blood shed for his liberty,
  Sacred by love's first sigh and life's last fear,
We come of a good nest, for it shall yearn
Poor birds of passage, but may not return,

'Spread younger wings, and beat the winds afar.
  There sing more poets in that one small isle
Than all isles else can show—of such you are ;
  Remote things come to you unsought erewhile,
Near things a long way round as by a star.
  Wild dreams!' He laughed, 'A sage right infantile ;
With sacred fear behold life's waste deplored,
Undaunted by the leisure of the Lord.

'Ay go, the island dream with eyes make good,
  Where Freedom rose, a lodestar to your race ;
And Hope that leaning on her anchor stood
  Did smile it to her feet : a right small place.

Call her a mother, high such motherhood,
  Home in her name and duty in her face;
Call her a ship, her wide arms rake the clouds,
And every wind of God pipes in her shrouds.

'Ay, all the more go you. But some have cried
  "The ship is breaking up;" they watch amazed
While urged toward the rocks by some that guide;
  Bad steering, reckless steering, she all dazed
Tempteth her doom; yet this have none denied
  Ships men have wrecked and palaces have razed,
But never was it known beneath the sun,
They of such wreckage built a goodlier one.

'God help old England an't be thus, nor less
  God help the world.' Therewith my mother spake,
'Perhaps He will! By time, by faithlessness,
  By the world's want long in the dark awake,
I think He must be almost due: the stress
  Of the great tide of life, sharp misery's ache,
In a reclusesness of the soul we rue
Far off, but yet—He must be almost due.

'God manifest again, the coming King.'
  Then said my father, 'I beheld erewhile,
Sitting up dog-like to the sunrising,
  The giant doll in ruins by the Nile,
With hints of red that yet to it doth cling,
  Fell, battered, and bewigged its cheeks were vile,
A body of evil with its angel fled,
Whom and his fellow fiends men worshippèd.

'The gods die not, long shrouded on their biers,
  Somewhere they live, and live in memory yet;

Were not the Israelites for forty years
  Hid from them in the desert to forget—
Did they forget? no more than their last feres—
  Sons of to-day with faces southward set,
Who dig for buried lore long ages fled,
And sift for it the sand and search the dead.

'Brown Egypt gave not one great poet birth,
  But man was better than his gods, with lays
He soothed them restless, and they zoned the earth
  And crossed the sea; there drank immortal praise;
Then from his own best self with glory and worth
  And beauty dowered he them for dateless days.
Ever "their sound goes forth" from shore to shore,
When was there known an hour that they lived more?

'Because they are beloved and not believed,
  Admired not feared, they draw men to their feet;
All once, rejected, nothing now, received,
  Where once found wanting, now the most complete
Man knows to-day, though manhood stand achieved,
  His cradle-rockers made a rustling sweet;
That king reigns longest which did lose his crown,
Stars that by poets shine are stars gone down.

Still drawn obedient to an unseen hand,
  From purer heights comes down the yearning west,
Like to that eagle in the morning land,
  That swooping on her predatory quest,
Did from the altar steal a smouldering brand,
  The which she bearing home it burned her nest,
And her wide pinions of their plumes bereaven,
Spoiled for glad spiring up the steeps of heaven.

'I say the gods live, and that reign abhor,
And will the nations it should dawn? Will they
Who ride upon the perilous edge of war?
Will such as delve for gold in this our day?
Neither the world will, nor the age will, nor
The soul—and what, it cometh now? Nay, nay,
The weighty sphere, unready for release,
Rolls far in front of that o'ermastering peace.

'Wait and desire it; life waits not, free there
To good, to evil, thy right perilous—
All shall be fair, and yet it is not fair.
I thank my God He takes th' advantage thus;
He doth not greatly hide, but still declare
Which side He is on and which He loves, to us,
While life impartial aid to both doth lend,
And heed not which the choice nor what the end.

'Among the few upright, O to be found,
And ever search the nobler path, my son,
Nor say "'tis sweet to find me common ground
Too high, too good, shall leave the hours alone"—
Nay, though but one stood on the height renowned,
Deny not hope, nay will, to be that one.
Is it the many fall'n shall lift the land,
The race, the age!—Nay, 'tis the few that stand.'

While in the lamplight hearkening I sat mute
Methought 'how soon this fire must needs burn out.
Among the passion flowers and passion fruit
That from the wide verandah hung,' misdoubt
Was mine. 'And wherefore made I thus long suit
To leave this old white head? His words devout,

His blessing not to hear who loves me so—
He that is old, right old—I will not go.'

HIS JOURNEY.

But ere the dawn their counsels wrought with me,
And I went forth; alas that I so went
Under the great gum forest canopy,
The light on every silken filament
Of every flower, a quivering ecstasy
Of perfect paleness made it; sunbeams sent
Up to the leaves with sword-like flash endued
Each turn of that grey drooping multitude.

I sought to look as in the light of one
Returned. 'Will this be strange to me that day?
Flocks of green parrots clamorous in the sun
Tearing out milky maize—stiff cacti grey
As old men's beards—here stony ranges lone,
There dust of mighty flocks upon their way
To water, cloudlike on the bush afar,
Like smoke that hangs where old-world cities are.

'Is it not made man's last endowment here
To find a beauty in the wilderness;
Feel the lorn moor above his pastures dear,
Mountains that may not house and will not bless
To draw him even to death? He must insphere
His spirit in the open, so doth less
Desire his feres, and more that unvex'd wold
And fine afforested hills, his dower of old.

But shall we lose again that new-found sense
Which sees the earth less for our tillage fair?

Oh, let her speak with her best eloquence
  To me, but not her first and her right rare
Can equal what I may not take from hence.
  The gems are left: it is not otherwhere
The wild Nepèan cleaves her matchless way,
Nor Sydney harbour shall outdo the day.

Adding to-day this—that she lighteth it.'
  But I beheld again, and as must be
With a world-record by a spirit writ,
  It was more beautiful than memory,
Than hope was more complete.
                                                  Tall brigs did sit
  Each in her berth the pure flood placidly,
Their topsails drooping 'neath the vast blue dome
Listless, as waiting to be sheeted home.

And the great ships with pulse-like throbbing clear,
  Majestical of mien did take their way
Like living creatures from some grander sphere,
  That having boarded ours thought good to stay,
Albeit enslaved. They most divided here
  From God's great art and all His works in clay,
In that their beauty lacks, though fair it shows
That divine waste of beauty only He bestows.

HE SAILS.

The day was young, scarce out the harbour lights
  That morn I sailed: low sun-rays tremulous
On golden loops sped outward. Yachts in flights
  Flutter'd the water air-like clear, while thus
It crept for shade among brown rocky bights
  With cassia crowned and palms diaphanous,

And boughs ripe fruitage dropping fitfully,
That on the shining ebb went out to sea.

'Home,' saith the man self-banishèd, 'my son
Shall now go home.' Therewith he sendeth him
Abroad, and knows it not, but thence is won,
Rescued, the son's true home. His mind doth limn
Beautiful pictures of it, there is none
So dear, a new thought shines erewhile but dim,
'That was my home, a land past all compare,
Life, and the poetry of life, are there.'

But no such thought drew near to me that day;
All the new worlds flock forth to greet the old,
All the young souls bow down to own its sway,
Enamoured of strange richness manifold;
Not to be stored, albeit they seek for aye,
Besieging it for its own life to hold,
E'en as Al Mamoun fain for treasures hid,
Stormed with an host th' inviolate pyramid,

And went back foiled but wise to walled Bagdad.
So I, so all. The treasure sought not found,
But some divine tears found to superadd
Themselves to a long story. The great round
Of yesterdays, their pathos sweet as sad,
Found to be only as to-day, close bound
With us, we hope some good thing yet to know,
But God is not in haste, while the lambs grow

The Shepherd leadeth softly. It is great
The journey, and the flock forgets at last
(Earth ever working to obliterate
The landmarks) when it halted, where it passed;

And words confuse, and time doth ruinate,
  And memory fail to hold a theme so vast;
There is request for light, but the flock feeds,
  And slowly ever on the Shepherd leads.

'Home,' quoth my father, and a glassy sea
  Made for the stars a mirror of its breast,
While southing, pennon-like, in bravery
  Of long-drawn gold they trembled to their rest.
Strange the first night and morn, when Destiny
  Spread out to float on, all the mind oppressed;
Strange on their outer roof to speed forth thus,
  And know th' uncouth sea-beasts stared up at us.

LONDON.

But yet more strange the nights of falling rain,
  That splashed without—a sea-coal fire within;
Life's old things gone astern, the mind's disdain,
  For murmurous London makes soft rhythmic din.
All courtier thoughts that wait on words would fain
  Express that sound. The words are not to win
Till poet made, but mighty, yet so mild
Shall be as cooing of a cradle-child.

Sensation like a piercing arrow flies,
  Daily out-going thought. This Adamhood,
This weltering river of mankind that hies
  Adown the street; it cannot be withstood.
The richest mundane miles not otherwise
  Than by a symbol keep possession good,
Mere symbol of division, and they hold
The clear pane sacred, the unminted gold

And wild outpouring of all wealth not less.
  Why this? A million strong the multitude,
And safe, far safer than our wilderness
  The walls; for them it daunts with right at feud,
Itself declares for law; yet sore the stress
  On steeps of life: what power to ban and bless;
Saintly denial, waste inglorious,
  Desperate want, and riches fabulous.

Of souls what beautiful embodiment
  For some; for some what homely housing writ;
What keen-eyed men who beggared of content
  Eat bread well earned as they had stolen it;
What flutterers after joy that forward went,
  And left them in the rear unqueened, unfit
For joy, with light that faints in strugglings drear
  Of all things good the most awanting here.

Some in the welter of this surging tide
  Move like the mystic lamps, the Spirits Seven,
Their burning love runs kindling far and wide,
  That fire they needed not to steal from heaven,
'Twas a free gift flung down with them to bide,
  And be a comfort for the hearts bereaven,
A warmth, a glow, to make the failing store
  And parsimony of emotion more.

What glorious dreams in that find harbourage,
  The phantom of a crime stalks this beside,
And those might well have writ on some past page,
  In such an hour, in such a year, we—died,

Put out our souls, took the mean way, false wage,
  Course cowardly; and if we be denied
The life once loved, we cannot always rue
The loss; let be: what vails so sore ado?

And faces pass of such as give consent
  To live because 'tis not worth while to die;
This never knew the awful tremblement
  When some great fear sprang forward suddenly,
Its other name being hope—and there forthwent
  As both confronted him a rueful cry
From the heart's core, one urging him to dare,
'Now! now! Leap now.' The other, 'Stand, forbear.'

A nation reared in brick, how shall this be?
  Nor by excess of life death overtake.
To die in brick of brick her destiny
  And as the hamadryad eats the snake
His wife, and then the snake his son, so she.
  Air not enough, 'though every one doth take
A little,' water scant, a plague of gold,
Light out of date—a multitude born old.

And then a three-day siege might be the end;
  E'en now the rays get muddled struggling down
Through heaven's vasty lofts, and still extend
  The miles of brick and none forbid, and none
Forbode; a great world-wonder that doth send
  High fame abroad, and fear no setting sun,
But helpless she through wealth that flouts the day
And through her little children, even as they.

ENGLAND IN THE SPRING.

But forth of London, and all visions dear
To eastern poets of a watered land
Are made the commonplace of nature here,
Sweet rivers always full, and always bland.
Beautiful, beautiful! What runlets clear
Twinkle among the grass. On every hand
Fall in the common talk fiom lips around
The old names of old towns and famous ground

It is not likeness only charms the sense,
Not difference only sets the mind aglow,
It is the likeness in the difference,
Familiar language spoken on the snow,
To have the Perfect in the Present tense,
To hear the ploughboy whistling, and to know
It smacks of the wild bush, that tune—'Tis ours,
And look! the bank is pale with primrose flowers,

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

VERSES SENT WITH A DIAMOND.

WHILE Time a grim old lion gnawing lay,
And mumbled with his teeth yon regal tomb,
Like some immortal tear undimmed for aye,
This gem was dropped among the dust of doom.

Dropped, haply, by a sad, forgotten queen,
A tear to outlast name, and fame, and tongue:
Her other tears, and ours, all tears terrene,
For great new griefs to be hereafter sung.

Take it,—a goddess might have wept such tears,
Or Dame Electra changed into a star,
That waxed so dim because her children's years
In 'leaguered Troy were bitter through long war.

Not till the end to end grow dull or waste,—
Ah, what a little while the light we share!
Hand after hand shall yet with this be graced,
Signing the Will that leaves it to an heir.

SONG.

FROM PRELUDES TO A PENNY READING.

I.

O MY heart! what a coil is here!
Laurie, why will ye count me dear!
Laurie, Laurie, lad, make not wail,
With a wiser lass ye'll sure prevail,
For ye sing like a woodland nightingale.
And there's no sense in it under the sun;
For of three that woo I can take but one,
So what's to be done—what's to be done?
And
There's no sense in it under the sun.

II.

Hal, brave Hal, from your foreign parts
Come home, you'll choose among kinder hearts.
Forget, forget, you're too good to hold
A fancy 'twere best should faint, grow cold,
And fade like an August marigold;
For of three that woo I can take but one,
And what's to be done—what's to be done?
There's no sense in it under the sun,
And
Of three that woo I can take but one.

III.

Geordie, Geordie, I count you true.
Though language sweet I have none for you.
Nay, but take me home to the churning mill
When cherry boughs white on yon mounting hill
Hang over the tufts o' the daffodil.
For what's to be done—what's to be done?
Of three that woo I must e'en take one,
Or there's no sense in it under the sun,
And
What's to be done—what's to be done?

DUET.

FROM PRELUDES TO A PENNY READING.

She. WHILE he dreams, mine old grand-sire,
And yon red logs glow,
Honey, whisper by the fire,
Whisper, honey, low.

He. Honey, high's yon weary hill,
Stiff's yon weary loam;
Lacks the work o' my goodwill,
Fain I'd take thee home.

O how much longer, and longer, and longer,
An' how much longer shall the waiting last?
Berries red are grown, April birds are flown,
Martinmas gone over, ay, and harvest past.

She. Honey, bide, the time's awry,
Bide awhile, let be.
He. Take my wage then, lay it by,
Till't come back with thee.

The red money, the white money,
Both to thee I bring—
She. Bring ye ought beside, honey?
He. Honey, ay, the ring.

Duet. But how much longer, and longer, and longer,
O how much longer shall the waiting last?
Berries red are grown, April birds are flown,
Martinmas gone over, and the harvest past.

FOR EXMOOR.

SONG FROM PRELUDES TO A PENNY READING.

FOR Exmoor—
For Exmoor, where the red deer run, my weary heart doth cry.
She that will a rover wed, far her foot shall hie.
Narrow, narrow, shows the street, dull the narrow sky.
(*Buy my cherries, whiteheart cherries, good my masters, buy.*)

For Exmoor—
O he left me, left alone, aye to think and sigh,
'Lambs feed down yon sunny coombe, hind and yearling shy,

Mid the shrouding vapours walk now like ghosts on high.'
(*Buy my cherries, blackheart cherries, lads and lasses, buy.*)

For Exmoor—
Dear my dear, why did ye so? Evil days have I,
Mark no more the antler'd stag, hear the curlew cry.
Milking at my father's gate while he leans anigh.
(*Buy my cherries, whiteheart, blackheart, golden girls, O buy.*)

SONG FOR THE NIGHT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

(*A Humble Imitation.*)

'**And birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.**'

IT is the noon of night,
And the world's Great Light
Gone out, she widow-like doth carry her;
The moon hath veiled her face,
Nor looks on that dread place
Where He lieth dead in sealèd sepulchre;
And heaven and hades, emptied, lend
Their flocking multitudes to watch and wait the end.

Tier above tier they rise,
Their wings new line the skies,
And shed out comforting light among the stars;
But they of the other place
The heavenly signs deface,
The gloomy brand of hell their brightness mars;
Yet high they sit in thronèd state—
It is the hour of darkness to them dedicate.

And first and highest set,
Where the black shades are met,

The lord of night and hades leans him down;
His gleaming eyeballs show
More awful than the glow,
Which hangeth by the points of his dread crown;
And at his feet, where lightnings play,
The fatal sisters sit and weep, and curse their day.

Lo! one, with eyes all wide,
As she were sight denied,
Sits blindly feeling at her distaff old;
One, as distraught with woe,
Letting the spindle go,
Her starry-sprinkled gown doth shivering fold;
And one right mournful hangs her head,
Complaining, 'Woe is me! I may not cut the thread.

'All men of every birth,
Yea, great ones of the earth,
Kings and their councillors, have I drawn down;
But I am held of thee,—
Why dost Thou trouble me,
To bring me up, dead King, that keep'st Thy crown?
Yet for all courtiers hast but ten
Lowly, unlettered, Galilean fishermen.

'Olympian heights are bare
Of whom men worshipped there,
Immortal feet their snows may print no more;
Their stately powers below
Lie desolate, nor know
This thirty years Thessalian grove or shore;
But I am elder far than they;—
Where is the sentence writ that I must pass away

'Art thou come up for this,
Dark regent, awful Dis?
And hast thou moved the deep to mark our ending?
And stirred the dens beneath,
To see us eat of death,
With all the scoffing heavens toward us bending?
Help! powers of ill, see not us die!'
But neither demon dares, nor angel deigns, reply.

Her sisters, fallen on sleep,
Fade in the upper deep,
And their grim lord sits on, in doleful trance;
Till her black veil she rends,
And with her death-shriek bends
Downward the terrors of her countenance:
Then, whelmed in night and no more seen,
They leave the world a doubt if ever such have been.

And the winged armies twain
Their awful watch maintain;
They mark the earth at rest with her Great Dead,
Behold, from antres wide,
Green Atlas heave his side;
His moving woods their scarlet clusters shed,
The swathing coif his front that cools,
And tawny lions lapping at his palm-edged pools.

Then like a heap of snow,
Lying where grasses grow,
See glimmering, while the moony lustres creep,
Mild-mannered Athens, dight
In dewy marbles white,
Among her goddesses and gods asleep;

And swaying on a purple sea,
The many moorèd galleys clustering at her quay.

Also, 'neath palm trees' shade,
Amid their camels laid,
The pastoral tribes with all their flocks at rest ;
Like to those old-world folk,
With whom two angels broke
The bread of men at Abram's courteous 'quest,
When, listening as they prophesied,
His desert princess, being reproved, her laugh denied.

Or from the Morians' land
See worshipped Nilus bland,
Taking the silver road he gave the world,
To wet his ancient shrine
With waters held divine,
And touch his temple steps with wavelets curled,
And list, ere darkness change to grey,
Old minstrel-throated Memnon chanting in the day.

Moreover, Indian glades,
Where kneel the sun-swart maids,
On Gunga's flood their votive flowers to throw,
And launch i' the sultry night
Their burning cressets bright,
Most like a fleet of stars that southing go,
Till on her bosom prosperously
She floats them shining forth to sail the lullèd sea.

Nor bend they not their eyne
Where the watch-fires shine,

By shepherds fed, on hills of Bethlehem:
They mark, in goodly wise,
The city of David rise,
The gates and towers of rare Jerusalem;
And hear the 'scaped Kedron fret,
And night dews dropping from the leaves of Olivet.

But now the setting moon
To curtained lands must soon
In her obedient fashion, minister;
She first, as loth to go,
Lets her last silver flow
Upon her Master's sealèd sepulchre;
And trees that in the garden spread,
She kisseth all for sake of His low-lying head,

Then 'neath the rim goes down;
And night with darker frown
Sinks on the fateful garden watchèd long;
When some despairing eyes,
Far in the murky skies,
The unwishèd waking by their gloom foretell;
And blackness up the welkin swings,
And drinks the mild effulgence from celestial wings.

Last, with amazèd cry,
The hosts asunder fly,
Leaving an empty gulf of blackest hue;
Whence straightway shooteth down,
By the Great Father thrown,
A mighty angel, strong and dread to view;
And at his fall the rocks are rent,
The waiting world doth quake with mortal tremblement;

The regions far and near
Quail with a pause of fear,
More terrible than aught since time began,
The winds, that dare not fleet,
Drop at his awful feet,
And in its bed wails the wide oceàn;
The flower of dawn forbears to blow,
And the oldest running river cannot skill to flow.

At stand, by that dread place,
He lifts his radiant face,
And looks to heaven with reverent love and fear;
Then, while the welkin quakes,
And muttering thunder breaks,
And lightnings shoot and ominous meteors drear,
And all the daunted earth doth moan,
He from the doors of death rolls back the sealèd stone—

—In regal quiet deep,
Lo, One new waked from sleep!
Behold, He standeth in the rock-hewn door!
Thy children shall not die—
Peace, peace, thy Lord is by!
He liveth!—they shall live for evermore.
Peace! lo, He lifts a priestly hand,
And blesseth all the sons of men in every land.

Then, with great dread and wail,
Fall down, like storms of hail,
The legions of the lost in fearful wise;
And they whose blissful race
Peoples the better place,
Lift up their wings to cover their fair eyes,

And through the waxing saffron brede,
Till they are lost in light, recede, and yet recede.

So while the fields are dim,
And the red sun his rim
First heaves, in token of his reign benign,
All stars the most admired,
Into their blue retired,
Lie hid—the faded moon forgets to shine,—
And, hurrying down the sphery way,
Night flies, and sweeps her shadow from the paths of day.

But look! the Saviour blest,
Calm after solemn rest,
Stands in the garden 'neath His olive boughs;
The earliest smile of day
Doth on His vesture play,
And light the majesty of His still brows;
While angels hang with wings outspread,
Holding the new-won crown above His saintly head.

THE END.

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON.